

understand the orientation and course of modern thought. Therefore, we are delighted with the publication of this book and must congratulate the author for such commendable work.

Leopoldo J. Prieto López

Department of Humanities, Francisco de Vitoria University,
Madrid, Spain

leopoldojose.prieto@ufv.es

DOI:10.1163/22141332-11040008-14

Jonas Nordin, Gustavs Strenga, and Peter Sjökvist, eds., *The Baltic Battle of Books: Formation and Relocation of European Libraries in the Confessional Age (c. 1500–c. 1650) and Their Afterlife*. Library of the Written Word, 116. Leiden: Brill, 2023. Pp. xvi + 350. Hb, \$139.00. Open Access.

This edited volume offers a significant investigation of the transformations and enduring significance of book collections in Northern Europe during the Age of Confessionalization. The collection of essays, despite its original conference being canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, provides a comprehensive examination of how religious, political, and military conflicts shaped the fate of libraries, focusing particularly on the impact of the Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and subsequent wars.

One of the volume's key strengths is its focus on multiple centuries and political regions, emphasizing the long-term consequences of the events it discusses. The book is divided into three sections on creating, relocating, and reconstructing libraries. It also engages with contemporary issues such as the restitution of cultural artifacts, the use of digital technologies in reconstructing lost libraries, and the ongoing debates surrounding national identity and cultural heritage.

The introduction, "A Battle of Books through Five Centuries," by the volume's editors, sets the tone for the collection by exploring the unpredictable destinies of book collections over the centuries. The authors investigate the impact of religious conflicts on libraries during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, highlighting how these upheavals led to the destruction, relocation, and sometimes rapid regeneration of monastic and other significant collections. The chapter also touches on contemporary issues of restitution and ownership, using examples such as the 2011 exchange of manuscripts between Sweden and Denmark. The authors advocate for continued international

cooperation in the study and reconstruction of historical libraries, emphasizing the importance of viewing these collections as dynamic entities with long life cycles.

Several chapters, particularly those by Hanna Mazheika, Kathleen M. Comerford, Peter Sjökvist, and Laura Kreigere-Liepiņa, highlight the significant role of the Jesuits in shaping the intellectual and cultural landscapes of Northern Europe. The Jesuits' contributions to print culture and education are evident throughout the book, making it a valuable resource for scholars of Jesuit studies. The discussion of Jesuit libraries offers insights into the Society's information management practices and their long-term impact on European intellectual history.

Laine Tabora's contribution investigates the liturgical and devotional practices of the Cistercian nuns in Riga through their surviving manuscripts. These books, transferred to the local Jesuit college, provide valuable insights into the spiritual life of the convent. Andris Levāns and Gustavs Strenga also examine the Cistercian library and two late medieval mendicant libraries, focusing on the evolution of religious book collections in Riga and their role in the city's intellectual life before the disruption of the Reformation.

Two contributions by Sjökvist and Kreigere-Liepiņa respectively focus on the relocation and reconstruction of the Riga Jesuit College Library, which acquired the aforementioned Cistercian library. Established during the Counter-Reformation and operating until its seizure by Swedish forces in 1621, the collection was transferred primarily to Uppsala University Library. Sjökvist's chapter examines the integration of the Jesuit books into a Lutheran academic context. His analysis reveals the complexities and challenges of managing these literary spoils of war, emphasizing their paradoxical value as cultural capital.

Kreigere-Liepiņa's article explores the history and virtual reconstruction of the Riga Jesuit College Library. Despite challenges posed by incomplete records and the dispersion of items across various countries, recent efforts have cataloged more than eight hundred titles, enhancing global access to this significant cultural collection. The project underscores the library's historical and cultural significance, particularly within Northern European book history, and highlights the broader impact of Jesuit educational institutions.

Swedish libraries also benefited from collections seized from the Czech lands. Lenka Veselá's chapter on books from Olomouc, a key religious center in Moravia, explores the looting of approximately twenty-five thousand books during the Thirty Years' War. The Swedish occupation from 1642 to 1650 led to the systematic plundering of libraries, including the complete removal of the

Jesuit library. Many of these looted books were lost in a Stockholm fire in 1697. Veselá highlights the cultural and religious significance of this looting and calls for further study of the preserved books.

In addition to building libraries, Jesuits in northern Europe advanced a growing publishing industry. Mazheika demonstrates the international network of the Jesuits by examining the cultural and intellectual exchange between British Jesuits and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The chapter highlights the significant contributions of English and Scottish Jesuits to the Jesuit Academy of Vilnius and the broader print culture in the region. Mazheika notes how British students and scholars actively participated in literary production and how Polish-Lithuanian Jesuits, influenced by English Catholic martyrdom, constructed local martyrological narratives to strengthen Catholic identity in the region.

On a larger scale, Comerford's analysis of pre-suppression Jesuit libraries offers a detailed examination of Jesuit collections across Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe. As part of the European Jesuit Libraries Provenance Project, she uses data from inventories and extant books to analyze collection patterns and the intellectual priorities of the Society. Her chapter provides valuable insights into the complexities of Jesuit librarianship and the survival of these collections.

The Baltic Battle of Books is a meticulously researched and thoughtfully edited volume that offers rich insights into the history of book collections in Northern Europe. Its interdisciplinary approach, combining history, religious studies, and cultural heritage, makes it a valuable resource for scholars of early modern Europe. Although some of the chapters overlap by examining the same collections, they offer viewpoints from different perspectives, which depending on the reader, may be an appeal as opposed to a detraction. The book's focus on the evolving nature of libraries, shaped by religious, political, and military conflicts, provides a nuanced understanding of the complex forces that have shaped European cultural heritage. This volume is highly recommended for anyone interested in the history of libraries, book culture, Jesuit literary culture and the intellectual history of the Baltic region.

Drew B. Thomas

School of History, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

drew.thomas@ucd.ie

DOI:10.1163/22141332-11040008-15