

Building the *Bürgerbibliothek*: Donating to the Zurich Citizens' Library in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

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Abstract

This paper uses the *Bibliothecae novae Tigurinorum*, the donors' register of the Zurich *Bürgerbibliothek* ('citizens' library'), to explore how the collection of the city's first public library developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The donors' register records over 3,000 gifts from some 900 local and foreign benefactors between 1629, the year of the library's founding, and 1769. Unlike a standard library or auction catalogue, the donors' register allows us to observe engagement with the *Bürgerbibliothek* over time and reveals that, while a remarkable influx of patrons in the first decade of the library's existence secured its position in the cultural and intellectual fabric of Zurich society, interest in the institution dropped significantly by the end of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the *Bürgerbibliothek*'s consistent growth across the period attests to the popularity of the library and its accessible collection as well as its benefactors' belief in the reciprocal value of patronizing this new type of civic institution.

Keywords: Libraries; donors; catalogue; Zurich; Switzerland; Swiss Confederacy; patronage; gifts; printing; book history

Introduction

On the evening of 6 February 1629, Heinrich Müller, Johann Ulrich Ulrich, and the brothers Johann Balthasar and Felix Keller, four recent graduates of the Zurich *Carolinum*, the institute of advanced theological education in the city, met for dinner at the home of their former professor Heinrich Ulrich to celebrate the students' returns from their respective postgraduate trips abroad.¹ At some point in the night, according to Professor Ulrich's version of events, the group arrived at the topic of the books the students had acquired on their visits to the continent's many renowned universities and centres of higher learning and their desire to trade them with each other. This prompted Heinrich Müller to suggest establishing a library in their hometown of Zurich in the mould of some of the impressive libraries he had encountered on his travels through England, France, and Italy.² Müller's library would be open to all citizens of and visitors to Zurich and allow them access to the brand of knowledge that was being dispensed at the *Carolinum* without enrolling in its courses.³ This proposal was met with immediate approval from the rest of the group and, the very next day, Müller pledged his copies of the Zurich Reformation printer Christoph Froschauer's German-language Old and New Testaments to this cause.⁴ Thus, the *Bibliotheca Tigurinorum civica*, commonly referred to as the *Bürgerbibliothek Zürich*, was born.

This, at least, was the narrative presented by Professor Heinrich Ulrich in a pair of pamphlets, one in Latin and one in German, written and printed in Zurich in 1629 to advertise the library project.⁵ Ulrich praises the young founders' zeal for education before arguing that public libraries were integral to the fostering of a culture of scientific and theological inquiry in urban centres and could also help with the preservation and propagation of the Reformed faith, which, a decade into the Thirty Years' War and only a few years removed from the Catholic League's sacking of Heidelberg's renowned *Bibliotheca Palatina*, appeared more vulnerable than ever before.⁶ Ulrich therefore now called on all 'highly and well-learned

gentlemen, of clerical and secular status... and every learned person in the city and countryside of Zurich' to contribute to the literary project with material or monetary gifts.⁷ Ulrich also claimed, critically, that all would-be donors would have their acts memorialised in a written register.⁸

The *Bibliothecae novae Tigurinorum*, a 762-page register of donors and their donations to the *Bürgerbibliothek* between 1629 and 1769, is Ulrich's promise made good.⁹ The register is divided into two sections: the former, organised chronologically, deals with gifts from visiting benefactors while the latter, longer portion covers citizen donors and is arranged alphabetically by last name, with entries from the same family arranged under the clan's hand-drawn, coloured-in coat of arms, ensuring the librarians avoided bruising any egos while elevating the contributions of entire lineages and, more practically, allowing space for the register to expand over a century and a half.

This paper will explore the nuances of public library building and patronage in early modern Zurich through the lens of the *Bibliothecae novae Tigurinorum* and the actions of its curators and donors. Unlike a standard library or auction catalogue, which reflect a collection of books at a given moment in time, a donors' register allows us to observe the gradual expansion of a library over an extended period. This paper will highlight some of the larger patterns of donors and donations on display in the register and, with them, how the public's engagement with the institution changed over the *longue durée*. I will also analyse the subject matter and bibliographic details of the items that entered the *Bürgerbibliothek*, revealing the form and function its administrators and patrons envisioned their new public library as taking on at various moments in the early modern era.

All told, the image that we are left with is one of immediate and enthusiastic growth, with scores of donations arriving from within and without the city of Zurich, followed by decades of gradual expansion in which the grandiose gifts of folios bequeathed by visiting

dignitaries were replaced by less impressive but decidedly more popular and practical works of contemporary literature provided by local readers. Despite this drop in international interest, however, the Zurich *Bürgerbibliothek* managed to survive until the early twentieth century, at which point it was amalgated with other similar institutions in the city to form the Zurich Zentralbibliothek as we know it today. This paper will argue that the seeds for this type of institutional staying power were sown centuries earlier, as the donors and curators of the *Bürgerbibliothek* laboured to establish the public library as both an accessible literary resource and a symbol of Zurich's civic heritage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The *Bürgerbibliothek* in Zurich Intellectual Society

The *Bürgerbibliothek* was not the first institutional library in Zurich, but it was certainly the first widely accessible, purpose-built resource of its kind in both the city and the Swiss Confederacy as a whole.¹⁰ The library's founding statutes, which survive in Latin and in German, ask that library administrators and patrons show 'care and diligence' in their engagement with the *Bürgerbibliothek* 'for the benefit of the churches and the Fatherland, through the furtherance of sound doctrine and God's word'. All citizens who desired to borrow books could do so in return for a deposit of ten guilders or a 'tribute' (*Berehrung*) of equivalent value. Even foreigners who were living in Zurich were allowed to borrow books from the *Bürgerbibliothek*, although they were required to pay a fee of five guilders or the approximate value of the item.¹¹ Ignoring the exceptions inherent to early modern European concepts of citizenship, the *Bürgerbibliothek*, with its focus on accessibility and the civic education, was truly the first public library in the city of Zurich.



FIGURE 1: The titlepage of the Bibliothecae novae Tigurinae (ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22)

The development of the Zurich city library in the early 1630s inspired similar projects across the Protestant Swiss lands. In August 1631, the nobleman Jakob von Graviseth donated a portrait of his godfather, the French bibliophile Jacques Bongars, to the *Bürgerbibliothek*. Less than a year later, as thanks for having granted him citizenship, Graviseth donated Bongars' collection of over 3,000 volumes to the city of Bern to form the basis of a public library.¹² A *Stadtbibliothek* would open in Schaffhausen in 1636, while the music college ('*Musikkollegium*') in Winterthur, located only twenty kilometres northeast of Zurich, would inaugurate a citizens' library in their town in 1660. Although it had its imitators, however, the rate at which Zurich *Bürgerbibliothek* expanded in the decades after its founding was unmatched in the Swiss Confederacy: compare the 3,662 volumes the Winterthur public library recorded in 1755, nearly a century after its founding, to the 4,793 held by the Zurich *Bürgerbibliothek* only 35 years after it opened its doors.¹³

Local Donors to the Bürgerbibliothek

The *Bürgerbibliothek* benefited from the consistent support of members of the Zurich elite throughout the seventeenth century, attesting to the perceived necessity of a public library in the city and the value Zurich's political, spiritual, and intellectual leaders placed on patronizing such an institution. The *Bibliotheksgesellschaft* ('library society', the centre's administrative board) could also serve as a springboard to a more prestigious post. Johann Jakob Ulrich, the son of Professor Heinrich Ulrich, after working as the library's first secretary, would go on to become deacon of the Fraumünster and a professor at the *Carolinum* in 1630 before being named *Antistes*, the highest ecclesiastical office in the city, in 1646.¹⁴

The *Bürgerbibliothek* was a cradle of elite patronage from its earliest days. The donors' register records six donations to the city library in February 1629. Most of these

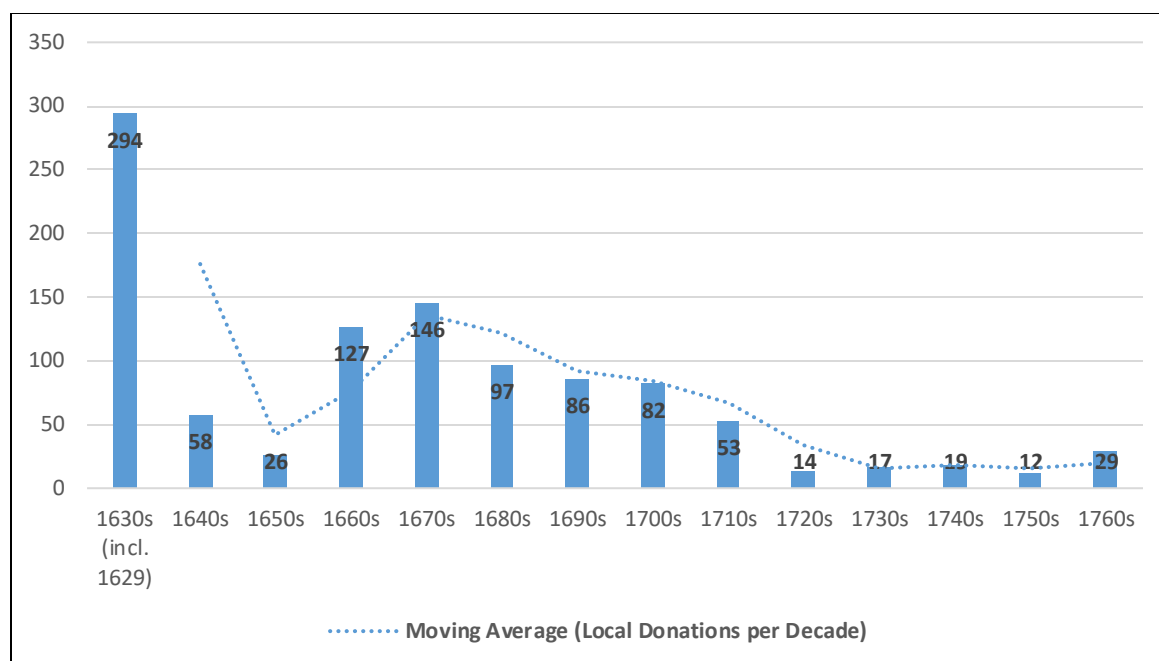


FIGURE 2: Local Donations to the Bürgerbibliothek per Decade, 1629-1769.

came from the *Bürgerbibliothek*'s founders and their kin, all members of Zurich high society: Heinrich Müller and his father, the city treasurer, under whose name the donation of the Froschauer Bibles is recorded; Felix Keller, the first author of the donation register and the son of a city councillor and rural *Vogt* (reeve, bailiff); Johann Ulrich Ulrich, also the son of a city magistrate, and the clergyman Johann Jakob Ulrich, Johann Ulrich's cousin and the son of the founders' esteemed professor.¹⁵ The single largest donation of the month, some 25 volumes, came from the Zurich literary star Johannes Wilhelm Simmler, pointing to just how quickly word of the library spread amongst the city social and intellectual elite.¹⁶ The following month was no different, as the library received donations from, among others, the professor Hans Jakob Wolf and the *Hauptmann* (military captain) Johann Wilhelm Stapfer, who also donated to the library in March 1629.¹⁷ Both men would serve on the library's inaugural *Bibliotheksgesellschaft* under the direction of Heinrich Müller, attesting to the direct participation of a diverse range of bourgeois professionals in the development of the *Bürgerbibliothek*.¹⁸ Almost all of the roughly 700 Zurich citizens who patronised the library

between 1629 and 1769 belonged to the city's upper crust, ranging from clergymen, guild leaders and merchants to academics and military men, whose gifts to the *Bürgerbibliothek* served to reinforce their status and involvement in Zurich public life.

The city magistracy also provided logistical assistance to the *Bürgerbibliothek*. The immediate administration of the library was the responsibility of the *Bibliotheksgesellschaft*, a mix of secular and ecclesiastical leaders, which reported in extenuating circumstances to the city council, specifically to the city treasurer and the *Obmann* ('chairman') of the cloisters, the two highest positions in the government after the mayors.¹⁹ At the beginning of the 1630s, the magistracy granted the library permission to move into what would become its permanent home in the *Wasserkirche*, a thirteenth-century church on the edge of the *Limmat* that sat only a stone's throw from both the *Grossmünster* and the town hall, confirming the institution's integration into the fabric of Zurich public life.²⁰ This was underscored by the donation of a new set of stained-glass windows in the *Wasserkirche* by councillors and guilds bearing each official's coat of arms as well as the transfer of the entire book collection of the city hall, consisting of some seventy volumes, to the *Bürgerbibliothek* in 1630.²¹ The *Bibliotheca Thuricensium Publica* opened its doors to the public in its new home on New Year's Day 1634 with a collection of at least 1,500 volumes; that the library was able to achieve this in just five years is a testament to the enthusiastic and active support of local elites and the city government.²²

The staying power of the *Bürgerbibliothek* in the political and cultural imagination of the wider Zurich citizenry is evidenced by several patterns of donations that we can observe across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Donating to the *Bürgerbibliothek* rapidly emerged as a practice to be replicated by members of the same family, often across multiple generations. The internal structure of the locals' section of the *Bibliothecae novae Tigurinorum* is designed to account for as much. Entries are organised alphabetically by last

name and grouped by family under hand-drawn and coloured coats of arms. Two of Zurich's most prolific donating dynasties were the twin branches of the bourgeois Escher family, who respectively produced some 20 and 28 benefactors to the *Bürgerbibliothek* between 1629 and 1765.²³ Three generations of the family of one Thomas Müller donated to the *Bürgerbibliothek* between 1633 and 1685, while the 1635 donation of the brothers Jakob, Josef, and Daniel Orelli was later followed by contributions from Daniel's sons Georg and Daniel in the 1660s and 1680s, and Georg's son, also Daniel, between 1681 and 1711.²⁴

While in most cases, the exact reasons donors had for sending gifts to the *Bürgerbibliothek* were not named, we find several instances where donations can be understood to coincide with important dates or milestones in a benefactor's life. It was common practice, for one, to donate to the *Bürgerbibliothek* on New Year's Day or Berchtold's Day (2 January), which were both civic holidays, as an expression of appreciation to the city library.²⁵ Individuals could also donate to the library to celebrate professional appointments. Hans Jakob Haab sent gifts to the *Bürgerbibliothek* to celebrate a handful of career moves, such as his appointment as library *Consiliarius*, his accession to the *Grosser Rat* in 1631, and following his nominations as *Stetrichter* (city judge), *Amtmann* (bailiff) of Rüti in 1634, and *Baumeister* ('master builder') in 1653.²⁶

Many citizens also made contributions to the *Bürgerbibliothek* upon their death. Occasionally, gifts were given in memory of or in the name of the departed by their widows or heirs. Exceptionally, in 1683, councilman Diethelm Hirzel donated 200 *Pfund* to the library as an '*Andenken*' ('remembrance') for his late brother-in-law, Friedrich Keller.²⁷ Contrary to most donations recorded in the donors' register, legacies were almost always cash gifts and ranged from the 50 *Pfund* left by the heirs of the dyer Hans Jakob Schaufelberger in 1693 to the 500 *Pfund* by the library's principal founder Heinrich Müller in the 1660s.²⁸ The donation register provides a single clue as to how this money was spent. In

1676 the printer Hans Jakob Bodmer the Younger, the son and successor of Hans Jakob and Dorothea Pestalozzi, bequeathed 100 *Gulden* to the *Bürgerbibliothek*, which the register notes was used on 21 August to purchase an array of 27 books, including two printed as far afield as Lund and Uppsala in Sweden.²⁹

Gifts from Abroad

The *Bibliotheca novae Tigurinorum* records over 200 donations made by foreign benefactors from across Europe between 1629 and 1769. More foreigners than locals donated to the *Bürgerbibliothek* in its first year of operation, while over eighty non-citizens contributed to the library between 1629 and 1639, representing the single highest number of external contributions to the *Bürgerbibliothek* in a single decade over the period recorded by the donors' register. The presence of these cross-continental elites in the *Bürgerbibliothek's* register points to the emergence of a consensus opinion of the public library as a civic building project worthy of the same material and symbolic patronage a visiting dignitary might have paid to other local religious or political institutions.

Some of these earliest donors were foreigners already living and working in the city of Zurich, who would have seen their contributions to the library as a means of participating in local civic life and giving back to their adopted home. Vincenzo Paravicino, a religious refugee from the Grisons serving as pastor to the Italian congregation in Zurich, was the first non-citizen to donate to the *Bürgerbibliothek*, gifting the library his own printed Italian translation of a collection of polemics by the popular Huguenot controversialist Charles Drelincourt and a French-Latin dictionary.³⁰

The *Bürgerbibliothek* was also the beneficiary of gifts from individuals with less fixed ties to the city of Zurich, whose donations to the public library served to strengthen diplomatic, military, or mercantile relationships with the city and its rulers. One of the most

prominent benefactors in this category is the Huguenot nobleman and military leader Henri de Rohan, who served as general of the allied Protestant forces in the alpine Valtellina in the Thirty Years War. In September 1632, Rohan gifted a Hebrew manuscript Bible to the *Bürgerbibliothek*, sending it to Zurich with his quartermaster Jacques Dupuy, who himself donated a complementary rabbinical commentary.³¹ In a letter to the library secretary, Rohan extends his best wishes for the success of this project destined ‘for the public good’ (*‘au bien public’*).³² Rohan’s words underscore the gift’s dual function as a fulfilment of patronage obligations as well as a genuine recognition of the practical benefits a public library was seen as having for the further education of the learned elite. Rohan’s actions are mirrored by donations from diplomats and merchants from England, Venice, the Low Countries, Sweden and the French Huguenot territories, whose presence in Zurich and in the pages of the *Bibliothecae novae Tigurinorum* represent likeminded expressions of political and economic support.

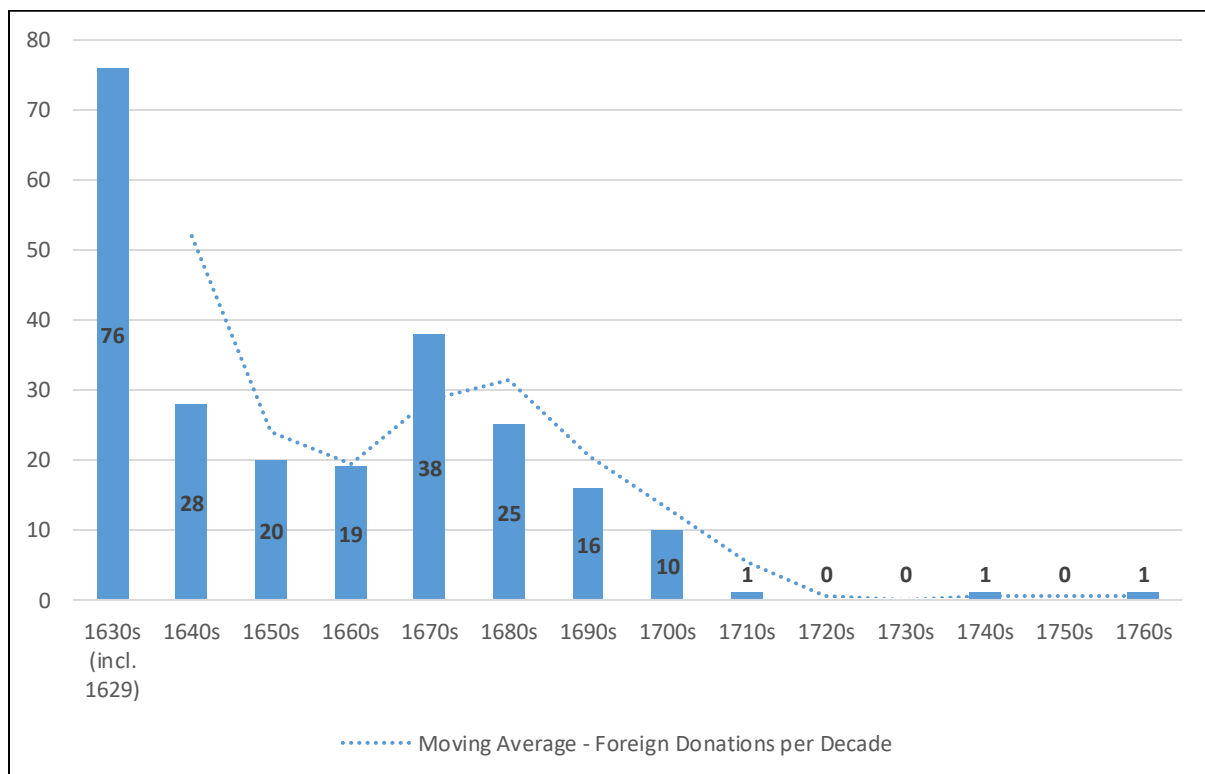


FIGURE 3: Foreign Donations to the Bürgerbibliothek per Decade, 1629-1769.

Tracking the quantity of foreign donations to the *Bürgerbibliothek* illustrates how this civic building project gradually lost its international lustre in the decades after its founding. Only ten contributions from non-citizens are recorded in the first decade of the 1700s compared to roughly 36 in the 1670s and 16 in the 1690s, while a mere six donations occurred between 1710 and 1769, with the last of these taking place over twenty years apart.³³ This decline must have been tangible to the compilers of the *Bibliothecae novae Tigurinorum*. The last foreign donation to the library came in 1769 from Jakob Fels, mayor of the nearby Bavarian city of Lindau on Lake Constance and was completed ‘through the mediation’ (*durch Vermittlung*) of Johann Heinrich Schinz, head of the Zurich salt trade; a far cry from the great Venetian and Dutch merchants, English nobles, and Huguenot commanders who patronised the city and its library in the preceding century.³⁴ The section of foreign donors was organised chronologically and not alphabetically, unlike the one dedicated to the contributions of local patrons, making this drop-off all the more evident. This section was also accompanied by an index, implying that the number of gifts by foreign donors was understood to be finite and thus manageable.³⁵ At the same time, the index allowed visitors to the library, citizens or otherwise, to survey the names of the great European diplomats who helped build up the local library in its formative years and thus served as a valuable testament to the prestige and patronage once afforded to the city of Zurich and its civic building projects.

In the Stacks: The Development of the *Bürgerbibliothek*’s Collection of Books in the 1630s and 1680s

The book collection of the Zurich city library developed over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thanks almost exclusively to the *Bürgerbibliothek*’s solicitation of private donors. The *Bibliotheksgesellschaft* tended to avoid purchasing private libraries or

estates outright, as was common practice amongst, for example, the Dutch municipal library builders of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³⁶ The *Bürgerbibliothek* considered purchasing the library of the learned Amerbach family in Basel in 1650 and again in 1660 as well as the estate of Hans Heinrich Heidegger at the turn of the eighteenth century before backing down on each occasion.³⁷ In spite of this, the *Bürgerbibliothek* expanded at an exponential rate in the first decades after its founding, reaching a landmark 6,612 volumes in 1683.³⁸

This growth demanded a major reconsideration of how the library housed its books. Since its move into the riverside *Wasserkirche*, the *Bürgerbibliothek*'s holdings had only occupied the building's top balcony, with the lower atrium kept empty for the occasional *Hochschule* disputation, lecture or examination.³⁹ This would change in 1675, when, after securing the permission of the city council, the pews of the *Wasserkirche* auditorium were transferred to the *Grossmünster*, the upper chamber reconfigured into a showroom for the *Bürgerbibliothek*'s non-bibliographic collection of curiosities, and the lower chamber finally converted into a proper library and reading room, complete with a set of ceiling-high bookcases organised by subject and tables that gave patrons the unprecedented experience of consulting books on the spot.⁴⁰ A subject index was drafted in May 1683 which describes how the library's holdings were categorised and how many volumes were held on each shelf.⁴¹ The refurbished *Bürgerbibliothek* opened its doors to the public on Pentecost 1677.⁴²

The *Bürgerbibliothek*'s sustained growth through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries points to its consistent use by the citizens of Zurich as an intellectual resource. The library's reliance on private donations, however, worked in many ways against guaranteeing this result, since the *Bibliotheksgesellschaft*, besides selling duplicates, would have had little say in what kinds of books it was acquiring from benefactors, especially in the library's earliest days. This section will compare details of the editions acquired by *Bürgerbibliothek*

in the first and fifth decades after its inauguration, evidencing how the *Bibliotheksgesellschaft* and their patrons each worked to shape the library's collections according to their own tastes and concerns in the years following its founding.

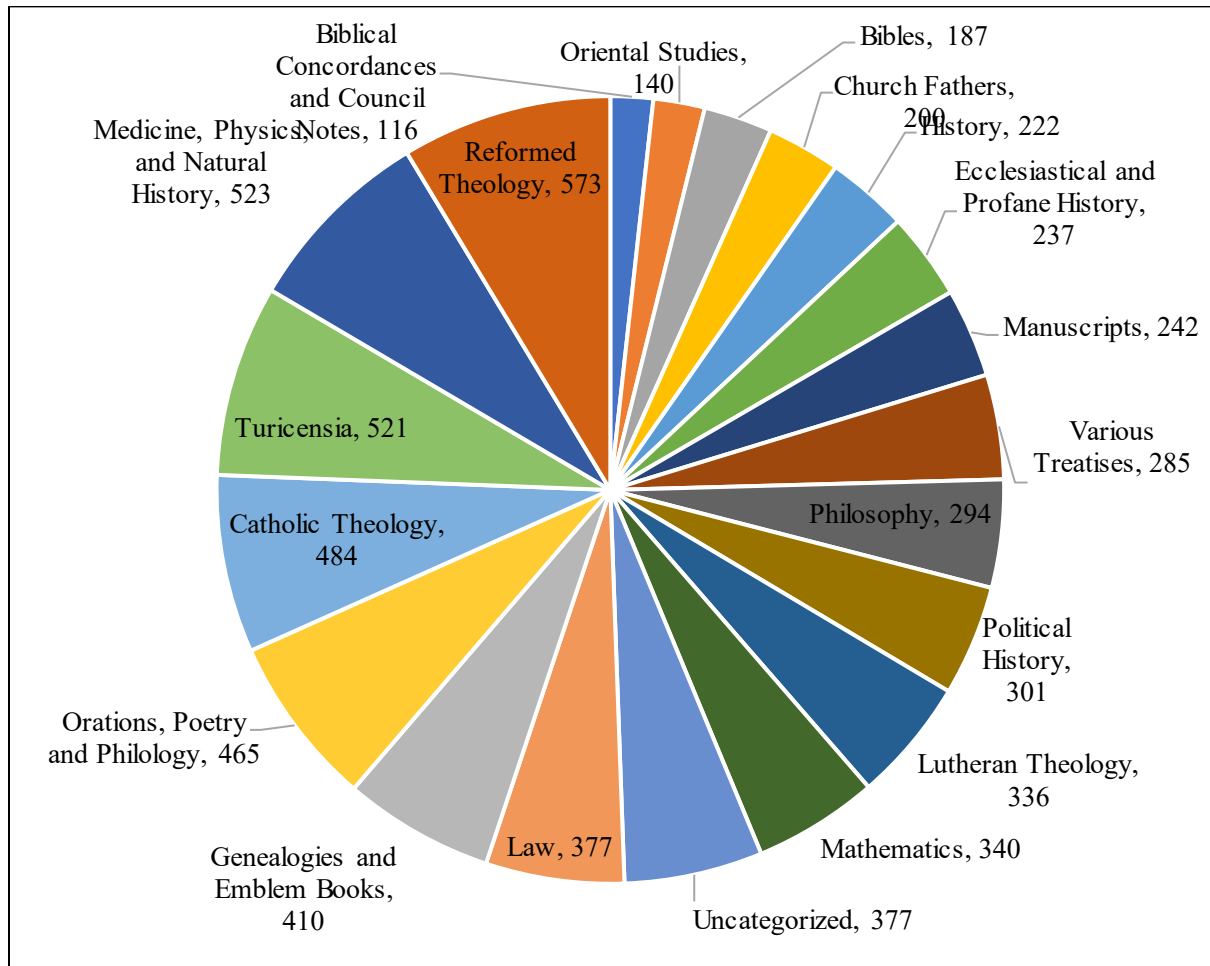


FIGURE 4: Distribution of Books in the Bürgerbibliothek by Subject, May 1683.

Place of Printing and the Cultivation of Turicensia

Comparing the bibliographic details of the volumes that arrived in the 1630s and fifty years later reveals what types of books donors qualified as worthy of gifting to the *Bürgerbibliothek* and the character they envisioned for the library to take on, as well as how these ideas changed over time. This data also shows how the learned elite of Zurich interacted with the wider European book trade. Most texts that arrived in the

Bürgerbibliothek in the 1630s and 1680s were printed in Zurich, followed closely in both instances by Basel, the traditional Humanist literary emporium of the Swiss Confederacy located less than 100 kilometres away and a perpetual confessional, mercantile, and political ally to Zurich. In the 1630s, the established print centres of Venice, a regular trade partner which lay just south of the Alps and Frankfurt am Main, easily accessible on the Rhine by way of Basel, came in third and fourth place, respectively, while a large number of the books that arrived in the library in the 1680s were printed in Amsterdam, by this point one of the most prolific book-producing cities in the world.⁴³

The strong showing of Zurich imprints in the city library comes as no surprise. Most of the donors to the library were from Zurich themselves and while books from faraway London or Leiden might have impressed with the distance they travelled, it would have been simpler and more cost effective for local benefactors to source titles from their own city. While it never reached the same levels of production it achieved during the Reformation, the Zurich printing industry remained competitive throughout the seventeenth century, with around fourteen different printing enterprises active in the town between the founding of the city library in 1629 and 1699.⁴⁴ At least half of these made donations to the *Bürgerbibliothek*, including the goldsmith-turned-printer Hans Jakob Bodmer, whose 1629 bequest of over 75 volumes, all printed in his workshop, represents the single largest donation received by the library from an individual donor over the period covered by the register.⁴⁵ The printer Michael Schaufelberger sent one of his books to the *Bürgerbibliothek* on every New Year's Day from 1666 to 1673, taking advantage of the *Bürgerbibliothek*'s capacity for preserving and popularizing his own handiwork while participating in one of the cultural traditions that surrounded patronizing the city library.⁴⁶

Maintaining local representation in the stacks was also a matter of civic pride for the people of Zurich. The 1683 subject index reveals the library kept two bookcases that held

over five hundred works of ‘*Scriptores Tigurani*’, also known as *Turicensia*, or writings by Zurich authors. The *Bürgerbibliothek* was founded with the goal of promoting and protecting the scholarly heritage of Zurich, a duty it fulfilled in part by displaying its local holdings in such a deliberate manner, physically laying out evidence of Zurich’s past and present strength as an intellectual centre. In 1678, a pamphlet of *desiderata* was printed and circulated amongst the citizenry, listing which works by Zurich authors the library had yet to acquire and promising a reward to whoever brought their copies forward.⁴⁷ That same year, the city council legislated that all Zurich authors and printers were required to hand copies of their new titles to the *Bürgerbibliothek* as they were released and at their own expense, whether printed domestically or abroad.⁴⁸ The donors’ register of the *Bürgerbibliothek* shows that these programmes were at least partially effective, even if we cannot observe a tangible spike in donation rates. Already in 1678, the city physician Jakob Ziegler donated two texts by his father of the same name that were explicitly named in the pamphlet. One year later, Johann Heinrich Fries, who had already patronised the library in 1675 and 1678, donated a lost book by Konrad Huser.⁴⁹ In 1680, the pastor Leonhard Engeler donated nine books by various authors from the library of his late father, all of which had been named as *desiderata*.⁵⁰ This decree was renewed in 1692 and 1728, suggesting that any signs of initial enthusiasm might not have been sustained beyond the 1680s.⁵¹

Age and Format

The age and format of the books gifted to the library further speak as to how they were valued by their donors and the library builders of seventeenth-century Zurich. Most books that entered the *Bürgerbibliothek* in the 1630s were produced after 1600, with a considerable number from the last decades of the sixteenth century as well, while most donations in the 1680s were printed that same decade. The *Bürgerbibliothek* was thus always equipped with

the latest literature, keeping the learned citizens of Zurich up to date with the most recent advances in a variety of fields. There were, of course, exceptions. The donors' register often explicitly noted when it received books printed at the workshops of Aldus Manutius, the Estienne family and local stalwart Christoph Froschauer, pointing to the prestige associated with these historic masters of their craft.

This is not to say that older books did not find their way to the *Bürgerbibliothek*. Hundreds of books from the first half of the sixteenth century and over fifty incunabula were donated to the library in the 1630s, including dozens of fifteenth-century Venetian and Lyonnaise legal texts from the Zurich town hall, a German legendary printed in Bad Urach in 1481 and a 1477 German-language Günther Zainer Bible printed in Augsburg.⁵² By contrast, the 1680s only saw five books donated from the *entire* sixteenth century, all produced after 1575, and one incunable, Eberhard Schleusinger's 1472 *Tractatus de Cometis*, which only came to the library as part of Leonhard Engeler's exchange of *desiderata*.⁵³ This reflects the library's inability to attract more impressive individual donations fifty years after it opened as well as a general lack of access to older books in Zurich two hundred years removed from the invention of moveable type.

Format is another category which speaks to the value of a book and how it might be displayed in the *Bürgerbibliothek*. Most of the books donated to the library in the 1630s were folios, of which there were over five hundred volumes, followed by some four hundred octavos and just over three hundred quartos. A mere fifty duodecimos arrived at the library in this decade, many as part of the May 1630 donation of military man Hans Grebel, who gifted twenty duodecimo histories of various European states, all printed in Leiden by the Elzeviers between 1626 and 1632.⁵⁴

Contrastingly, only twenty folios arrived at the *Bürgerbibliothek* in the 1680s, compared to over fifty octavos, around forty duodecimos, and a similar number of quartos.

Folios, while impressive both in size and in form, were more expensive to produce than their smaller counterparts. Consequently, over three times more quartos were printed than folios in Europe since the invention of moveable type and represented the most popular option for printers in the seventeenth century. In Zurich, too, the quarto and the octavo reigned supreme and were both respectively produced at over four times the rate of folios. The Universal Short Title Catalogue records only a single folio as having been printed in the city in the 1630s, a full Zurich Bible produced by Dorothea Pestalozzi, the widow of Hans Jakob Bodmer, in 1638.

Yet, as expensive as they might have been to purchase or produce, the folio ultimately made for a much more impressive gift than a quarto or octavo. Imposing in size and often illustrated, the folio would have been the first choice of any learned donor who wanted to make a name for themselves in Zürcher patronage circles, especially in the 1630s, when the new civic library was first getting off the ground and enthusiasm for the project was still fresh. Notable gifts of folios from this era include a fully coloured first edition of Conrad Gessner's *Historia animalium* in four volumes, arriving in the *Bürgerbibliothek* as part of the city hall library transfer along with scores of legal incunabula, most of which were also in folio.⁵⁵ The brothers Orelli donated a dozen recent Italian architectural folios in 1635, all of which would have included intricate graphics and diagrams.⁵⁶ The donors' register gives us a hint of the monetary value of such volumes. On 5 April 1680, the merchant Hans Georg Orelli donated eleven folio volumes of master cartographer Jan Jansson's *Novus atlas*, which the register notes was worth 200 Gulden, equivalent to just under half the average annual household income in the atlas' native Amsterdam.⁵⁷ The sheer number of folio volumes the library received in its first decade is another reminder of the initial hold it had over its patrons, who enthusiastically lavished expensive and visually impressive books on the new civic building

project, while the relative lack of such volumes only fifty years later points to how quickly this excitement wore off.

Subject Matter

The May 1683 subject index of the library's holdings shows which types of knowledge the *Bürgerbibliothek* had accumulated in the fifty years since it opened and how different books were valued, organised, and displayed in the library space. The twenty-five new bookshelves hugged the walls of the former choir of the Wasserkirche and formed a ring around the reading room. The placement of the bookcases was deliberate. The two first cases sat at the back of the choir but faced the entrance of the hall and were thus the first a visitor would see upon arrival. These held numerous rare and valuable editions of the Bible and were followed to the right by a shelf of biblical commentaries and concordances, one of works by the Church Fathers, and two shelves of Reformed theology. The next shelves were dedicated to Lutheran and Catholic theology, followed by two of juridical writings and four historical-political shelves for works of history, politics and political history, ecclesiastical and 'profane' history, and genealogies and emblem books, respectively. After these were shelves for mathematics, manuscripts, Greek and Roman poetry, orations and philology, 'Orientalist' literature, and two shelves for medicine, physics, and natural history. The circle was closed by two bookcases of *Turicensia*, which would have also been located at the back of the hall and thus in a visitor's immediate line of sight.⁵⁸

The 1683 index also notes the number of volumes held on each shelf, enabling us to plot the distribution of books by subject in the *Bürgerbibliothek* in the last decades of the seventeenth century and chart the development of the library's holdings over its first fifty years. As might be expected, the largest proportion of books housed in the *Bürgerbibliothek* in the 1630s and the 1680s were works of Reformed theology. These were complemented by

a strong showing of Lutheran and even Catholic writers in line with contemporary library building tastes aimed at achieving a collection of universal knowledge as prescribed, most notably, by Gabriel Naudé in his *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque*, which appeared only two years before work started on the Zurich public library.⁵⁹ Indeed, by 1683, the *Bürgerbibliothek* had accumulated enough books of Lutheran theology to fill an entire shelf, while Catholic writings were spread over two.

The academic disciplines of ‘physics’ and law are each given multiple shelves in the library’s 1683 classification system. Like theology, the young men of Zurich would have also encountered the natural sciences at the *Carolinum*, where a professorship in ‘physics’, which encompassed mathematics and natural history as well as ethics, had existed since the great naturalist Conrad Gessner first held the post in the 1540s, although prospective practitioners would have still required further education only attainable outside Zurich to be allowed to work.⁶⁰ The same was true of any would-be lawyers and jurists.

Accordingly, most donations in these genres were gifted by individuals with professional associations to the subject. In 1632, the physician Jakob Ziegler donated two of Conrad Gessner’s biological texts and later gifted his own treatise on fermentation and decomposition after it was published in Basel in 1647, as well as printed medical disputations in which he had participated during his university days in Basel and Königsberg.⁶¹ Scientific instruments were also given to the library. In the 1630s alone, the library’s museum of curiosities received a globe, a sundial, and a French instrument for surveying land mounted on a tripod.⁶² Likewise, the *Bürgerbibliothek* acquired most of its juridical literature from individuals like the Genevan jurist Jacques Godefroy (1636) or the Padua-trained lawyer and city councillor Hans Caspar Hirzel (1642). Most of the *Bürgerbibliothek*’s legal holdings actually came from the library of the Zurich city hall, which was transferred *en bloc* to the *Bürgerbibliothek* in May 1630. Although these types of literature would have ultimately

appealed to a far more limited demographic than popular theological works, we nonetheless find a considerable number of them in the library of a town where matriculating as a medical doctor or lawyer was impossible, pointing to the enthusiasm with which these professionals sought to share the specialized knowledge they had accumulated over the course of their practice.

According to the 1683 index, the *Bürgerbibliothek* dedicated four shelves to broadly ‘historical’ subgenres, which together held over 1,100 volumes, or close to one fifth of the library’s total holdings. This influx of new literature in the humanities reflects a growing popular interest in these up-and-coming genres on the eve of the Enlightenment. In the late 1670s, a handful of recent *Carolinum* graduates founded the *Collegium Insulanum*, a literary society whose members would meet every Tuesday on the upper floor of the Wasserkirche to give lectures in Latin or any of the vernacular languages of the Swiss Confederacy on medical, scientific, philosophical, political, or archaeological topics of the presenter’s choice.⁶³

Most, if not all members of the *Bürgerbibliothek*’s literary societies served on the *Bibliotheksgesellschaft* at some point and patronised the city library throughout their political and intellectual careers, with their donations often complementing the content of their lectures. Hans Heinrich Rahn, a founding member of the *Collegium Insulanum*, delivered a talk on foreign policy of the Swiss Confederacy; Rahn would also donate close to two dozen titles to the *Bürgerbibliothek* over a period fifty years, including his own chronicle of the Swiss Confederacy.⁶⁴ Christoph Werdmüller spoke to the *Collegium Insulanum* on changes to the military regiment in Zurich; in 1667, he presented his dissertation on the topic to the *Bürgerbibliothek*.⁶⁵ Johann Jakob Wagner, another founding member of the *Collegium Insulanum*, also donated many of his own writings to the *Bürgerbibliothek* in the 1670s and 1680s, including the first printed natural history of Switzerland and the handwritten *Historia*

Bibliothecae Tigurinorum Civicae, the earliest complete history of the *Bürgerbibliothek*.⁶⁶

The prevalence of these literary societies and their members in the *Bürgerbibliothek* as patrons, administrators, and donors demonstrates how the public library was used as an alternative intellectual space for the fostering of new Enlightenment ideas in the sciences and humanities in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

Conclusion

On 25 July 1634, the young Hungarian theologians László Mező Szanthai and Mihály Fabri Dobraviczai, two of the few foreign-born students to graduate from the *Carolinum* in the early seventeenth century, donated the four volumes of the German-Dutch thinker Nicolaus Vedel's *Arcana Arminianismi*, printed in Leiden between 1632 and 1634, to the Zurich *Bürgerbibliothek*.⁶⁷ Like so many of their colleagues at the *Carolinum*, Szanthai and Dobraviczai proceeded from Zurich to matriculate at the University of Basel, where they defended their theses in 1633 and 1632, respectively.⁶⁸ It was in Basel that the pair likely met or became aware of Vedel, a former professor of philosophy in Geneva who was also trying for his doctorate at the Swiss university to qualify for a teaching position in Deventer.⁶⁹ After graduating from Basel, Szanthai and Dobraviczai travelled together back to Hungary, just as so many Zurich natives were similarly expected to come home following their academic success abroad. Dobraviczai can later be found working at the Reformed *Collegium* in Sárospatak, where Szanthai was also likely active.⁷⁰ Before returning east, however, the expatriates made a point of returning once more to the city that kickstarted their scholarly careers and share with the citizens of Zurich a taste of the knowledge they had acquired over the course of their personal intellectual journeys.

Szanthai and Dobraviczai's engagement with the *Bürgerbibliothek* is evocative of the larger relationship between the Zurich public library and its donors in the seventeenth

century. The *Bibliotheca Tigurinorum civica* was founded to cultivate in earnest the spiritual and scientific education of the citizens of Zurich. The library received considerable local and foreign support in the decade following its founding, with benefactors from a variety of elite professional backgrounds seeing in their donations and patronage of the *Bürgerbibliothek* a means of furthering their own social and political advancement, publicizing their own scholarly work or, as was the case with Szan thai and Dobraviczai, preserving information on any of a number of topics, traditional or contemporary, they deemed worthy of transmitting to a wider audience.

Although foreign and, to a lesser extent, local interest in the *Bürgerbibliothek* dropped off significantly towards the end of the seventeenth century, the public library remained a cultural mainstay in Zurich through to 1915, when it was amalgamated along with a handful of other libraries in the canton to form the *Zentralbibliothek Zurich*. Many of the titles that arrived in the *Bürgerbibliothek* in the early modern period remain in Zurich to this day, including Szan thai and Dobraviczai's copy of *Arcana Armianismi*, a lasting monument to the magisterial political and intellectual culture of the city in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nonetheless, a proper study of the whereabouts of lost books, such as the engraver and printer Matthäus Merian's gifted edition of his illustrated history of the world, is necessary.⁷¹ Therefore, although the *Bibliotheca Tigurinorum civica* never reached the same levels of renown as some of its more cosmopolitan contemporaries, its librarians and their patrons fulfilled their duties to the citizens of Zurich with diligence and dignity deserving of the words of the poet Balthasar Venator: 'The honour of Parnassus and the whole of Helicon / belongs either to Zurich or to no place at all'.⁷²

¹ The *Carolinum* and the Zurich city council offered scholarships to graduating students to study abroad. Karin Maag, 'Financing Education: The Zurich Approach, 1550–1620', in *Reformations Old and New: Essays on the Socio-Economic Impact of Religious Change, c. 1470–1630*, ed. Beat A. Kümin (Aldershot: Routledge, 1996), 215.

- ² Johann Heinrich Ulrich, *Bibliotheca Thuricensium publico private: selectiorum variorum linguarum et scientiarum librorum* (Zurich: [s.n.], 1629), C3v. Christian Scheidegger, 'Buchgeschenke, Patronage und protestantische Allianzen: Die Stadtbibliothek Zürich und ihre Donatoren im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert', *Zwingliana* 44 (2017), 471.
- ³ Ludwig Forrer, 'Die Zürcher Zentralbibliothek und ihre Vorgeschichte', *Librarium: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft = Revue de la Société Suisse des Bibliophiles* 4, no. 1 (1961), 2.
- ⁴ Ulrich, *Bibliotheca Thuricensium publico private*, quoted in Salomon Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche und der Stadtbibliothek in Zürich* (Zurich: Drell, Füssli und Comp., 1848), 42.
- ⁵ These were the above-mentioned Latin *Bibliotheca Thuricensium publico private* and the German-language *Bibliotheca nova Tigurinorum publico-privata* ([Zurich: s.n.], 1629), USTC 2098899.
- ⁶ Scheidegger, 'Buchgeschenke', 465.
- ⁷ Ulrich, *Bibliotheca nova Tigurinorum publico-privata*, quoted in Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 41. ['Jeden gstudirten Personen in der Stadt und Landschaft Zürich als rechten Liebhabern und Beförderern des gemeinen Wohlstandes vermittelt nutzlicher fremder Sprachen und loblicher freyer Künste'.]
- ⁸ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 42.
- ⁹ Zurich, Zentralbibliothek Zürich (hereafter ZBZ), Ms Arch St 22, *Bibliothecae novae Tigurinorum publico privatae album* (1629-1769), <<https://doi.org/10.7891/e-manuscripta-45784>>, 546.
- ¹⁰ The collegiate statutes of the Grossmünster canonry (*Grossmünsterstift*) writes as early as 1260 of a 'librarius' or 'custos armarii librorum' tasked with the binding and caring of books in the monastic library, which from 1588, was only open to members of the town clergy. Robert Barth, 'Bibliotheken an theologischen Ausbildungsstätten in Zürich', *Zwingliana* 16, no. 4 (1984), 309.
- ¹¹ ZBZ, MSc B 89, fol. 29-34, fol. 29-34. Reprinted in Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 57-60.
- ¹² ZBZ, Ms. Arch St 22, 21.
- ¹³ Rolf Weiss, 'Von der Bürgerbibliothek zur Stadtbibliothek Winterthur', *Librarium: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft = revue de la Société Suisse des Bibliophiles* 34 (1991), 7. Urs B. Leu et al., *Handbuch der historischen Buchbestände, Band 3: Kantone Uri bis Zürich, Register* (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 2021), 370.
- ¹⁴ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 43. Christian Moser, 'Ulrich, Johann Jakob', *Historische Lexicon der Schweiz* (hereafter *HLS*), <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/010885/2013-01-25/> (accessed 13 July 2022).
- ¹⁵ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 427-428 (the Müllers), 350 (Keller), 587 (the Ulrichs).
- ¹⁶ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 546.
- ¹⁷ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 558-559 (Stapfer), 623 (Wolf).
- ¹⁸ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 43.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ E. Stauber, 'Von der Wasserkirche in Zürich,' *Schweizer Heimatschutz* 18, no. 3 (1923), 40-41.
- ²¹ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 44. ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, fol. 9r-11r.
- ²² Scheidegger, 'Buchgeschenke', 472. Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 45.
- ²³ For the Eschers 'vom Luchs', see ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 216-223; for the Eschers 'vom Glas', see 224-228. Katja Hürlimann, 'Escher', *HLS*, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/023794/2012-04-05/>, accessed 19 July 2022.
- ²⁴ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 429 (Thomas, Hans Heinrich, and Johannes I Müller) and 431 (Johannes II Müller), and 462-464 (the Orellis).
- ²⁵ Scheidegger, 'Buchgeschenke', 474.
- ²⁶ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 282.
- ²⁷ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 308.
- ²⁸ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 538 (Schaufelberger) and 428 (Müller).
- ²⁹ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 168-170. Scheidegger, 'Buchgeschenke', 480.
- ³⁰ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 27. Charles Drelincourt, *Compendio delle controversie* (Geneva, 1630), USTC 6700519. Robert Estienne, *Dictionnaire françois-latin* (Paris : Robert Estienne, 1549), USTC 29527.
- ³¹ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 1 (Rohan), 36 (Dupuy).
- ³² Scheidegger, *Buchgeschenke*, 483-484.
- ³³ Specifically, the Venetian cardinal and librarian Gerolamo Querini's 1748 gift (ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 120) and Lindau jurist Jakob Fels' donation in 1769 (123).
- ³⁴ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 120.
- ³⁵ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 127-134.
- ³⁶ Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *The Library. A Fragile History* (London: Profile, 2021), 186-7.
- ³⁷ Leu et al., *Handbuch der historischen Buchbestände, Bd. 3*, 370.
- ³⁸ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 68.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

- ⁴¹ Ibid., 69. The handwritten index, ‘Series Repositorum seu Receptauctorum Bibliothecae Tigurinorum Civicae, 1 May 1683’, can be found in ZBZ, MSc B 89.
- ⁴² Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*.
- ⁴³ See especially Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World: Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019).
- ⁴⁴ Christoph Reske, *Die Buchdrucker des 16. Und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 1046-1050. All printing figures taken from the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC) unless otherwise noted.
- ⁴⁵ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 167-8.
- ⁴⁶ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 536-7.
- ⁴⁷ *Catalogus scriptorium Tigurinorum, qui in bibliotheca civica Tigurina desiderantur* ([Zurich: s.n.], 1678), ZBZ, 6.270,5.
- ⁴⁸ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 69, n. 21.
- ⁴⁹ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 638 (Ziegler), 240 (Fries). Konrad Huser, *De Imposturis & Ceremoniis Juadaeorum nostril temporis* (Basel: Peter Perna [1575]), USTC 699033.
- ⁵⁰ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 214.
- ⁵¹ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 69n2. This was not uncommon: The secular and ecclesiastical authorities of the Confederate associate of Geneva saw it necessary to remind local printers and publishers of their obligations to the legal deposit multiple times per year. See Ingeborg Jostock, *La censure négociée: le contrôle du livre à Genève, 1560 -1625* (Geneva: Droz, 2007), 37-9.
- ⁵² Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea sanctorum, sive Lombardica historia Leben der Heiligen: Winterteil* (Bad Urach, Conrad Fyner, 1481), USTC 746159. *Biblia* (Augsburg: [Günther Zainer], 1477), USTC 74105.
- ⁵³ [Eberhard Schleusinger], *De cometis* [Beromünster: Helias Heliae, after April 1472), USTC 744124.
- ⁵⁴ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 265.
- ⁵⁵ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, f. 9r. Conrad Gessner, *Historia animalium*, Lib. I-IV (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1551, 1554, 1555, 1558), USTC 624827, 624826, 624829, 624828.
- ⁵⁶ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 462-3.
- ⁵⁷ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 465. Jan Jansson, *Novus atlas absolutissimus, das ist Generale Welt-Beschreibung*, 11 vols, (Amsterdam: Jan Jansson [1657-1664]). Pettegree and der Weduwen, *Bookshop of the World*, 18.
- ⁵⁸ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 69.
- ⁵⁹ Gabriel Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque présenté à Monsieur le président de Mesme* (Paris: François Targa, 1627), USTC 6019927.
- ⁶⁰ Hans Nabholz, ‘Zürichs höhere Schulen von der Reformation bis zur Gründung der Universität 1525-1833’ in Ernst Gagliardi, Hans Nabholz and Jean Strohl (eds), *Die Universität Zürich und ihre Vorläufer* (Zurich: Verlag der Erziehungsdirektion, 1938), 11-12.
- ⁶¹ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 638. Conrad Gessner, *Physicarum meditationum* (Zurich, Christoph Froschauer (I), 1586), USTC 624830 and *De omni rerum fossilium* (Zurich: Hans Jakob Gessner, 1550 [1565]), VD16 G 1768. Jakob Ziegler, *Fermentatio generationis et corruptionis causa* (Basel: Hans Jakob Genath, 1647), VD17 23:000336V.
- ⁶² From Hans Jakob Bürkli (ZBZ, MS Arch St 22, 189), Hans Rudolf Leemann (385) and Adrian Ziegler (639), respectively.
- ⁶³ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 71-2. The *Collegium Insulanum* would cease operations in 1681 but would be quickly succeeded by the ‘*Collegium der Vertaulichen*’ (‘College of the Confidential’) in 1686 and later by the ‘*Collegium der Wohlgesinnten*’ (‘College of thie Well-Meaning’).
- ⁶⁴ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 72, n. 33. ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 483-4. Johann Heinrich Rahn, *Eidtnössische Geschicht-Beschreibung* (Zurich: Hans Rudolf Simler, 1690), VD17 39:124151D.
- ⁶⁵ Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 72n33. ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 614. Christoph Werdmüller (resp.) and Johann Heinrich Heidegger (praes.), *Quaestiones politicae de imperio et subiectione* (Zurich: Michael Schaufelberger, 1667), VD17 12:184300U.
- ⁶⁶ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 597-598. Johann Jakob Wagner, *Historia naturalis Helevitiae curiosa* (Zurich: Hans Heinrich Lindinner, 1680), VD17 14:079865Q.
- ⁶⁷ ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 52. Nicolaus Vedelius, *De arcanis arminiasmi libri duo* (Leiden: apud Franciscus Hegerus [Willem Chrisiaensz vander Boxe], 1632), USTC 1028447.
- ⁶⁸ The pair’s theses were printed as László Mező Szanthai (res.) and Sebastian Beck (praes.), *Themata theologica de fine passionis et mortis Dominicae* (Basel: Hans Jakob Genath, 1633) and Mihály Fábri Dobraviczai (res.) and Theodore Zwinger the Younger (praes.), *Antitheseōn concilio Tridentino oppositarum... respondebit Michael Fabri Dobraviczai Ungar* (Basel: Genath, 1632), VD17 15:750408W.
- ⁶⁹ F. S. Knipscheer, ‘Vedelius, Nicolaas’, in *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, Vol. 10, ed. J. Blok and C. Molhuysen (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1937), 1076.

⁷⁰ Jan-Andrea Bernhard, *Konsolidierung des reofrmierten Bekenntnisses im Reich der Stephanskron* (Göttingen, 2017), 516, n. 204.

⁷¹ Szanthal and Dobraviczai's edition of *Arcana Armianismi* is held at the ZBZ under the shelfmark D 109. Merian's donation is on ZBZ, Ms Arch St 22, 24. Johann Ludwig Gottfried and Matthäus Merian, *Historische Chronica oder Beschreibung derführnembsten Geschichten* (Frankfurt am Main: Matthäus Merian and Kaspar Rötel, 1630), VD17 23:236584G.

⁷² 'Sed modo Parnassum totumque Heliconis / Aut TIGURI, aut nullo credimus esse loco'. Balthasar Venator, 'H. Balthasari Venatoris Donarium, in Nova Tigurinorum Bibliotheca suspendum' (1643), quoted in Vögelin, *Geschichte der Wasserkirche*, 57.