

# Cross-Border Printing Privileges in the Seventeenth-Century Low Countries

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## Abstract

Based on the assumption that printing privileges were meant to protect printer-publishers from market competition locally, scholars have primarily studied such privileges in individual states. This article is the first attempt to study printing privileges transnationally, by focusing on the phenomenon of cross-border printing privileges in the seventeenth-century Habsburg Netherlands and the Dutch Republic. I examine both the foreign printers requesting a privilege in the Low Countries and local printers requesting a privilege from a foreign authority. In doing so, this essay analyses why printers were requesting privileges for their books from more than one authority across political borders. Rather than seeing these cross-border privileges solely as a way for printers to expand the reach and commercial viability of their published works, this article demonstrates that, by securing privileges from multiple authorities, printers showed they were able to navigate the market for institutions and complex networks of power. By analysing diplomatic correspondence alongside privilege requests, I demonstrate the crucial role of ambassadors in favouring certain printers and their project. Throughout the seventeenth century, the state and its representatives became involved in securing such privileges from other authorities. This hitherto hidden role of diplomatic agents alerts us both to the fierce competition in a certain segment of the international book market and the importance of managing a state's international reputation.

*Keywords:* transnational history, printing privileges, ambassadors, intermediaries, Holy Roman Empire, book market

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In June 1649, right before the publication of his *Musurgia universalis* in Rome, Athanasius Kircher, the famous Jesuit polymath, obtained a nine-year exclusive privilege from the Privy Council in Brussels prohibiting any printer in the Habsburg Netherlands from reissuing his new and ambitious work.<sup>1</sup> A month later, the Privy Council granted a similar privilege to two Roman booksellers for the *Rerum medicarum*, a monumental encyclopaedia of the natural history of New Spain, which had just been printed in Rome.<sup>2</sup> Kircher and the two Roman booksellers had good reasons to request governmental protection in an entirely different jurisdiction from that in which the books were originally printed: printer-publishers in the Habsburg Netherlands, especially those active in Antwerp, had developed a commercial strategy of reprinting Roman editions, often in cheaper octavo or quarto editions.<sup>3</sup>

Cross-border reprinting, mostly without the consent of the author, was quite common in early modern Europe, as a transnational legal infrastructure was non-existent. In the case of Jesuit authors, some measures had been taken in the Habsburg Netherlands to prevent reprinting without their consent: printers in principle had to obtain the permission of the local Jesuit provincial.<sup>4</sup> Such measures failed to have the desired effect, however, and disputes between Jesuit authors and printers were not uncommon. In 1648, for example, the Roman Jesuit Famiano Strada quarrelled with the Antwerp printer Maria de Man

1 Kircher, *Musurgia universalis*; Brussels, Algemeen Rijksarchief (hereafter ARB), Geheime Raad, Spaans Bewind (hereafter GR) 1279/143, Petition 15 June 1649. The dossiers mainly contain petitions with the name of the applicant and include secretarial notes with decision and potential changes to the text before a privilege was granted. For the reorganisation of this archive into separate dossiers, see Soenen, *Inventaire*. This article was written as part of the NWO VIDI project 'Inventing Public Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe'. This article was further supported by the ERC project *Before Copyright* (ERC, BE4COPY, 101042034), funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. I would like to thank Helmer Helmers, the contributors to this special issue, and the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions.

2 Hernández, *Rerum medicarum*, was printed in Rome by Vitale Mascardi in 1649. ARB, GR 1279/81, Petition 5 July 1649. Jacques Louis Mayrot and Jean Paul Roqueti present themselves at the financiers of this edition in their request.

3 In 1619 the Capuchin friar Francesco Longo a Coriolano, together with his Roman publisher Brugiotti, requested a twenty-year privilege and obtained a six-year privilege from the Privy Council to prevent the reprinting of their edition of *Summa Theologica*: ARB, GR 1277/131, Petition 22 January 1619.

4 See the documents in ARB, GH 1276/347, 17 December 1609, and GH 1276/356, 11 June 1615.

about the reprinting of his history *De Bello Belgico*.<sup>5</sup> The timing of the two 1649 requests from Rome are thus not a coincidence: Kircher and the two booksellers clearly wanted to avoid the difficulties Strada was experiencing, and therefore decided to pre-emptively turn to the Privy Council for additional protection.

Apart from Athanasius Kircher, only a select few famous international individual such as Justus Lipsius and Orlando Lasso have received scholarly attention for their efforts in obtaining exclusive privileges from foreign rulers.<sup>6</sup> Other cross-border requests for privileges, such as the one submitted by the two Roman booksellers, have escaped the attention of book historians.<sup>7</sup> The general assumption is that it was not common practice for printers to request privileges from multiple authorities.<sup>8</sup> In her overview of Dutch printing privileges, for example, Isabella van Eeghen remarked that ‘you need a lantern to find foreign booksellers’ – a Dutch expression that neatly captures the notion that detailed research is required to find something rare or exceptional.<sup>9</sup> Reliable data for early modern Europe, however, was lacking. A systematic survey of Venetian privileges (1469-1603), recently undertaken as part of the EMOBookTrade project, suggests that cross-border privileges were not an entirely marginal phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> In total, the database contains 5,705 privileges; filtering for editions which were awarded privileges by more than one administrative body offers a total of 1,258 privileges: 737 were requested by the printers and publishers, and only 170 by authors.<sup>11</sup> These numbers for one of the most important book markets in the sixteenth century reveal that the phenomenon was not as rare as previously thought. Additional research on other regions is required, therefore, to understand how privileges functioned on a transnational level before the existence of a European-wide legal framework.

This article breaks new ground by analysing the phenomenon of cross-border privileges for the Habsburg Netherlands and the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century.

5 Maria de Man, widow of Jan Cnobbaert, reprinted Strada’s *De Bello Belgico* in octavo in 1648. She had obtained a privilege from the Privy Council, and it seems that Strada had transferred his privileges of the Holy Roman Emperor, Viceroy of Naples, Governor of Milan, and the King of France to her. Jesuit officials in Antwerp and Brussels received letters from Rome to request their assistance in the dispute. See Antwerp, Rijksarchief, Provincie der Jezuieten 1855, letter to Robert Fremault, 11 July 1648, and 1856, letter to John Baptist Engelgrave, 18 August 1648. On the role of women within early printing houses, see Wyffels, *Women and work*; for the success of Strada’s work, see Lamal, ‘Translated’.

6 For Kircher, see Fletcher, ‘Athanasius Kircher’; Stolzenberg, ‘The Holy Office’. In 1592, Lipsius obtained a thirty-year privilege for his works from the Holy Roman Emperor: Koppitz, *Die kaiserlichen*, 320; De Lantsheer, ‘An Author and his Printer’, 16-29. For Lasso, see Haar ‘Orlando’.

7 Studies on privileges have primarily focussed on individual states and their different jurisdictional institutions. See for instance Keller-Rahbé (ed.), *Privilèges de libraire*, 331-474.

8 With the exception of papal privileges, which were transnational in nature: Ginsburg, ‘Proto-property’. See also an updated version in Italian: Ginsburg, ‘Proto-proprietà’.

9 Van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel*, V, 218: ‘naar buitenlandse boekverkopers moet men met een lantaarntje zoeken’.

10 See the ERC project ‘An Evidence-based Reconstruction of the Economic and Juridical Framework of the European Book Market’, led by Angela Nuovo: <https://emobooktrade.unimi.it/db/public/frontend/index> (Accessed on 29 November 2024). See Squassina, ‘I privilegi’.

11 For attention to authors, see *Privilèges d’auteurs*; Squassina, ‘Authors and the System of Publishers’; Geerdink, ‘De literaire auteur’.

Publishing houses and printers in the Southern and Northern Netherlands had strong international trading connections and continued to be present at the Frankfurt and Leipzig book fairs. Stijn van Rossem has suggested that these international-oriented publishers had other means at their disposal to counteract the reprinting of their publications by their foreign competitors, ranging from professional honour and mutual respect to retributive justice.<sup>12</sup> If this is true, and printers did not necessarily need to request a privilege outside of their domestic market to protect their works, then why (and when) did they decide to pursue this strategy for certain projects? Analysing the Southern and Northern Netherlands in conjunction will allow a comparison of the reasons for foreign publishers to request privileges in one of these two regions, as well as for Netherlandish printers requesting privileges outside their local market from foreign states or rulers.

In exploring these questions, this article contributes to several related discussions regarding privileges in the Low Countries, and more broadly state control, access to different institutions, and the international book market. Scholars have long discussed the motivations that lay behind the requesting of privileges by publishers, and the conversation has recently moved from their acting as economic protection towards the appropriation of the awardee's prestige or authority to the work in question.<sup>13</sup> Incorporating diplomatic correspondence alongside the surviving archival documentation left by the different governing bodies in the Habsburg Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, this article provides new evidence to substantiate these latter claims. It allows us to reconfigure how we think about the involvement of the early modern state in the international book market, and builds on recent insights in diplomatic history which present diplomats as important cultural brokers while investigating their role in orchestrating and sponsoring a range of publications.<sup>14</sup> Profit-seeking printers relied on cooperative and personal relationships with foreign diplomats or with their own ambassador abroad. This hitherto hidden role alerts us both to the fierce competition in a certain segment of the international book market as well as the importance of managing a state's international reputation. Printing privileges increasingly became part of the negotiations between representatives and governing bodies of European states, taking their place within the complex exchanges of favours between states and thus acting as tools that could facilitate international alliances.

### *Successfully Navigating the Privileging System*

The limited research available on printing privileges in the Habsburg Netherlands and the Dutch Republic is more a function of the perceived importance of each region within book history discourses than of the availability of sources. Antwerp remained important for Catholic publishing, as the examples of 1649 illustrate, whilst Amsterdam became one

12 Van Rossem, *Het gevecht*.

13 Buning, 'Privileging the Common Good', and his contribution to this special issue; Rose, 'Protected Publications'.

14 Keblusek, 'Double Agents'; 'Sowerby', 'Early Modern'; Helmers, 'Public Diplomacy'; Lamal and Van Gelder, 'Addressing Audiences'.

of the dominant international printing centres.<sup>15</sup> With the rise of Amsterdam as a publishing hub, scholarship on privileges has shifted its focus from Antwerp to investigating the privileging system of the province of Holland, to the detriment of developments in the Habsburg Netherlands.<sup>16</sup> Due to the lack of datasets offering systematic information concerning privileges in both the Habsburg Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, it is not possible at this stage to give any reliable numbers regarding the percentages of foreign requests or editions with more than one privilege.

Throughout the seventeenth century, publishers in both territories could submit requests to several different legal institutions. In the Habsburg Netherlands a request could be filed either with the Privy Council, whose jurisdiction comprised the entire territory, or the Council of Brabant (which covered the important publishing centre of Antwerp and the governmental centre of Brussels). Stijn van Rossem has demonstrated that the Verdussen family in Antwerp submitted 77 percent of their requests to the Council of Brabant with only 23 being made to the Privy Council.<sup>17</sup> Antwerp publishers dominated the local market and thus the legal protections by the Council of Brabant often sufficed. Moreover, protection by the Privy Council offered internationally-oriented publishers such as the Verdussens little additional advantages. On the basis of surviving evidence, foreign publishers navigating the system in the Habsburg Low Countries seem to have followed the preferences of the local printers. In the late seventeenth century, several printers active in the Holy Roman Empire who had strong trade connections with printers in Antwerp applied for privileges from the Council of Brabant for precisely this reason.<sup>18</sup> As we will see, their primary aim was to gain legal protection from the activities of Antwerp publishers, and they used the privileging system to achieve this.

A similar division between central and regional institutions existed in the Dutch Republic, where the States-General was the most important legislative body for granting printing privileges to foreign publishers. Privileges granted by the States-General included all the seven provinces, whereas those issued by the States of Holland were only valid in the province of Holland (not negligible in itself, since it included the important publishing centre Amsterdam). Until the mid-seventeenth century, privileges issued by the States-General were automatically accepted by the States of Holland.<sup>19</sup> This status quo was upset following

**15** More recent scholarship has countered the notion of the immediate decline of Antwerp after 1585, as Catholic publishing retained its importance: Van Rossem, *Het gevecht*. The most recent work on the book trade in the Dutch Republic is Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *The Bookshop*.

**16** For sixteenth-century Antwerp, see Baelde, 'De toekening'; Van de Branden, 'Drukooctroien'. Whereas the surviving records of the Privy Council of Habsburg Netherlands were inventoried by Micheline Soenen in 1983, no-one has yet attempted to investigate the privileging system in the seventeenth-century Habsburg Netherlands more systematically. Brief overviews include Soenen, 'Impression'; Machiels, *Privilege, censuur*, 46-60.

**17** Van Rossem, *Het gevecht*, 72. During the last decades of the seventeenth century, the autonomy of the Council became more limited: they had to submit lists of requests to the Privy Council for approval: Soenen, *Inventaire*, 127.

**18** ARB, Raad van Brabant (hereafter RB), Secretarissen 3677, Register of printing privileges, 1671-1706. Book historians have not yet properly analysed this incredibly rich source. For the years prior to 1671, there are still significant difficulties in finding the privileges in the archives of the Council of Brabant. The requests are kept in the general series of petitions (known as *gezegelde brieven*) sent to individual secretaries.

**19** Hoftijzer, 'Nederlandse boekverkoopprivileges'.

a fierce conflict regarding the privileges of the States-approved Bibles, which led to the States of Holland taking control. Nevertheless, it appears that foreign publishers continued to make the majority of their requests to the States-General, even though they found themselves confronted with new procedures. For instance, in 1643 the States-General only agreed to grant Joachim Moltken, a Danish publisher active in Sorø, a ten-year privilege for his new edition of the Saxon Grammaticus's history of Denmark on condition that he received the *attache* (the recognition or approval) of the provinces where he would like to sell the book.<sup>20</sup> By the end of the century, the States of Holland, following the wishes of its own printers, became more restrictive when granting privileges to foreign competitors. At the start of the eighteenth century, sixteen printers, incensed by the continued pirating of their editions, submitted a proposal to the States of Holland that any request for a privilege should include the name and residence of the applicant in order to deny any requests made on behalf or by a non-resident.<sup>21</sup> In 1715, the States of Holland adopted this measure, thereby excluding foreign publishers from requesting a privilege.<sup>22</sup>

The remaining archival documentation is fragmentary, and surviving requests, decisions, and privileges are often formulaic. For instance, the resolutions of the States-General for 24 May 1625 state that a ten-year privilege was given to Esther Rosa, a printer active in Frankfurt, to print or sell copies of the collected three volume work of the late Reformed theologian David Pareus in the Dutch Republic.<sup>23</sup> Such descriptions offer little to no clue as to exactly why a request was submitted to a specific institution and why it was accepted or denied. In the Habsburg Netherlands, it seems that requests were most often denied by the Privy Council because the works in question either lacked suitable approbation or because a privilege had already been granted to another printer.<sup>24</sup> This would seem to explain why, in 1694, the request of the Dillingen-based publisher Jean-Gaspard Bencard for exclusive privilege for the works of Jesuit Paolo Segneri in Latin and German was not granted.<sup>25</sup>

In the case of foreign publishers requesting a privilege, an additional factor may also have been at play. A connection to the Low Countries, such as the printer having been born in the region or there being a direct relationship with the author with the territory may have helped to obtain a privilege. Affiliation, it appears, may have mattered more than commercial necessities, and it explains why printers sometimes noted with their request that they were originally from the Low Countries. For instance, Michel van Dalen, a printer active in Münster, added the information that he was originally from Antwerp to his request to the Privy Council. This strategy seems to have worked in his favour, as the

20 Saxo, *Historiae Danicae*. The Hague, Nationaal Archief (hereafter NA), States-General (hereafter SG) 3202, Resolution 10 May 1643, fol. 423v.

21 Van Eeghen, *Amsterdamse boekhandel*, V, 186-190.

22 Van Eeghen, *Amsterdamse boekhandel*, V, 212. So far, I have not found similar prohibitions in the Habsburg Netherlands at the start of the eighteenth century.

23 She was the widow of the printer Jonas Rosa and ran the printing firm from 1620 onward. The incoming request is kept in NA, SG 4946; copied into the resolution see Japikse (ed.), *Resolutiën*, VII, 384; Pareus, *Operum Theologicorum*.

24 Van Rossem, *Het gevecht*, 62.

25 ARB, GR 1280/56, Petition 19 April 1694. A year earlier, the Council of Brabant had already granted, with approval of the Privy Council, a privilege to Louis de La Grange for the French translations of Segneri's works: ARB, GR 1280/97, List of books submitted by the Council of Brabant for approval, 1 June 1694.

Privy Council granted him and his publishing partner Volmar a four-year privilege for the first edition of the Jesuit controversialist Martinus Becanus's *Manuale controversarium*, as printed in Würzburg.<sup>26</sup> The prominent status of the author in this specific case may also have been to the printer's benefit. Becanus served as confessor to Emperor Ferdinand II and the printers had already obtained an imperial privilege.<sup>27</sup> Often printers used the argument that a work had already been granted a privilege by another ruler to their advantage, too. The two Roman booksellers noted at the beginning of this article sent a copy of the title page of *Rerum medicarum* and its numerous other privileges as supporting evidence to the Privy Council.<sup>28</sup> An imperial privilege or a set of other privileges must have been persuasive in the eyes of the councillors in Brussels.

The reason why van Dalen opted for the Privy Council can be explained by examining the second edition of Becanus's *Manuale*, printed in Münster.<sup>29</sup> This edition included a privilege by the Spanish king. It seems to refer to the four-year privilege that both printers obtained from the Privy Council, as it was a commonly used strategy by printers from the Holy Roman Empire to proclaim that they had a privilege from the Spanish monarch as soon as they obtained one from a governing body within the Spanish Netherlands.<sup>30</sup> Another reason for including the Spanish privilege was that in the very same year the same text had been published in the Southern Netherlands by two Antwerp printers without any form of privilege.<sup>31</sup> All subsequent editions of Becanus's manual by van Dalen and Volmar or their heirs contained the same reference to both imperial and Spanish privileges on the title page, conferring authority upon this bestseller.<sup>32</sup>

The status of the author and their connections to powerful figures may have helped foreign printers to obtain a privilege. In 1613, for example, the Privy Council granted a six-year privilege to the Parisian bookseller Nicholas la Caille for the publication of a French translation of Erycius Puteanus's neo-Latin novel against lavish banquets.<sup>33</sup> Presumably David Floritius, intendant for Prince Philip William of Orange and a good friend of Puteanus, who was in Paris at the time, urged the Parisian printer to publish the translation by Nicholas Pelloquin, a member of the parliament of Paris. As the successor of Justus Lipsius at the University of Leuven, Puteanus's political connections to the archdukes also help to explain why the Parisian printer, in this case, may have easily obtained a privilege from the Privy Council. These personal, scholarly, and political connections suggest that Puteanus approved of this French translation and that he was hoping to gain international recognition for his work in his moral philosophy.

The importance of a personal connection to the Low Countries and an author's status is further reinforced if we examine more closely why requests were denied. In 1596, for

26 ARB, GR 1277/83, Petition 25 September 1623.

27 The first printed edition only had an imperial privilege: Becanus, *Manuale* (1623).

28 ARB, GR 1279/81, Title pages and printed privilege included with the petition.

29 Becanus, *Manuale* (Münster 1624).

30 Another example is the edition of *Clypeus* by Johann Wilhelm Friessem, which also included the line 'cum privilegio catholici regis hispaniorum', when he had obtained a privilege from Council of Brabant.

31 Becanus, *Manuale* (Antwerp 1624).

32 Becanus, *Manuale* (1629).

33 Puteanus, *Comus*; ARB, GR 1276/171, Petition 11 May 1613. For more on this tract, see Verbeke, "Condemned by some".



example, Etienne Marchant, a printer in Pont-a-Mousson, Lorraine, requested that printers in the Archducal Netherlands be prohibited from republishing his recent edition of *Commentarii in quatuor Evangelistas* written by the Jesuit Juan Maldonado. His request was denied.<sup>34</sup> One reason may well have been that Maldonado was a Spanish Jesuit, who had spent most of his life teaching theology in France. The crucial factor, though, appears to have been that while his works were incredibly popular in France, they were not so in the Low Countries.

### *Privileges as Dispute Settlement*

Printers, like merchants operating across borders, knew how to find their way to the relevant institutions when necessary.<sup>35</sup> Obtaining a privilege was time-consuming and relatively expensive, and was only in some cases used by printers as a tool for settling disagreements in their favour, involving the authorities when relationships of trust and mutual respect had broken down. Printers operating on the international book market watched their competitors closely and kept their trading partners across Europe well-informed of the prices and actions.<sup>36</sup> As such, these men and women active in the business were well-versed in the intricacies of the different privileging systems and could manipulate them to their own advantage. One example of this can be found in a series of privileges requested by several printers from cities within the Holy Roman Empire to the Council of Brabant: each was related to the aggressive trading strategies of the Antwerp firm Verdussen in the 1670s. The Verdussens were an important Antwerp printing dynasty, who were, in this period, primarily interested in books to supply the Spanish market.<sup>37</sup> Convinced that the anti-Jansenist *Clypeus theologiae thomisticae* by the French theologian Jean-Baptist Gonet would do well in Catholic Spain, the Verdussens had been trying to convince a lot of European trade partners, including the Frankfurt publisher Johann Baptist Schönwetter, to print the work on their behalf, promising to barter large quantities for their own books.<sup>38</sup> When Schönwetter turned out to be unwilling or unable to undertake the assignment, the Verdussens negotiated with Johann Wilhelm II Friessem in Cologne to handle the project, who assured them that they would be able to buy an unlimited number of copies.<sup>39</sup> From the subsequent letters, it becomes clear that their business relationship turned sour as the Verdussens accused Friessem of undercutting their market by selling his copies to

34 ARB, GR 1276/93, Petition 29 May 1596. Incidentally, this is also the first reference to a foreign publisher submitting a request to the Privy Council. The following one granted to a printer outside jurisdiction of the Privy Council: Arnould de Coerswarem, bookseller and printer in the principality of Liège (ARB, GR 1276/97, Petition 26 April 1599).

35 Grafe, 'Was there a Market', 595-609. I am grateful to Christophe Schellekens for this reference.

36 See for instance Antwerp, Museum Plantin Moretus (hereafter MPM) 574, Endter to Balthasar III Moretus, Nuremberg, 8/18 January 1684, fol. 325, informing him that the widow of Zubrod was selling Moretus's works at a very cheap price.

37 Sabbe, *Briefwisseling*, I, xxiii-xxvi; Van Rossem, 'The Verdussens'.

38 Sabbe, *Briefwisseling*, I, 103-105 (no. LVIII).

39 Sabbe, *Briefwisseling*, I, 120-122 (nos. LXXIX and LXXX).



Jesuit colleges across the Habsburg Low Countries at a lower price.<sup>40</sup> The Verdussens were furious and threatened to sever all trading ties with Friessem. It seems that the Cologne printer took this action because he was unhappy with the bartering conditions and decided to obtain a nine-year privilege from the Council of Brabant around this time; in 1680 he filed a request for an extension of his privilege for another nine years.<sup>41</sup> This privilege seems to have been effective in preventing any pirate editions in the Habsburg Netherlands, because the Verdussen firm only printed an edition of Gonet's work in 1700.

Maria Katharina Leux von Leuxenstein, widow of the Frankfurt-based printer Johann Baptist Schönwetter, followed a similar path in response to the aggressive strategies of the Verdussens. Her husband had been a specialist in Catholic publishing and one of the trusted trading partners in Frankfurt of both the Verdussen and Moretus firms.<sup>42</sup> Right before Schönwetter died in 1672, the Verdussens requested that he send them sufficient copies of Petrus Rota's sermons to prevent other printers in Antwerp from reprinting the work.<sup>43</sup> When Schönwetter passed away, the Verdussens wrote to Maria Katharina with their hopes that she would continue her husband's printing business (adding that it was not easy for a woman) and if she did so, that their good trading relationship should continue.<sup>44</sup> They encouraged her again to send a good number of Rota's sermons, claiming that the high demand for the work was matched only by 'the appetite' amongst Antwerp printers to print the text themselves.<sup>45</sup> While threatening to copy was a commonly used strategy amongst booksellers and printers, it seems that, on this occasion at least, it backfired on the Verdussens, as Maria Katharina Leux von Leuxenstein promptly obtained a nine-year privilege for her edition of Rota's Latin work from the Council of Brabant.<sup>46</sup>

If the Verdussens were hoping to strong-arm this recently widowed printer, they were very much mistaken. Having protected her own work with a privilege, she continued with the same strategy alongside her new husband, Johann Peter Zubrod, a publisher who moved between Mainz and Frankfurt am Main. Publishers operating on the international market seem to have been aware of who held which privileges as they exchanged information with each other. Privileges were also at times bought and sold on the open market; it seems that the couple were planning on such a lucrative strategy when requesting privileges from the Council of Brabant.<sup>47</sup> In 1647, they together requested a privilege for the medical work of Lazare Rivière, and a year later one for an additional sermon

40 Sabbe, *Briefwisseling*, II, 40-43 (no. CXII), 46-47 (no. CXV), and 59-62 (no. CXXII).

41 ARB, RB, Secretarissen 3677, Register of privileges, 28 June 1680, fol. 58. The date of earlier privilege is uncertain, 1671 is based on a note that his 1680 privilege was a continuation of an earlier one for the same length of time.

42 Schmitz, 'Schönwetter'; Starp, 'Das Frankfurter Verlagshaus', 41, 60.

43 Rota, *Hortus Floridissimus*.

44 Sabbe, *Briefwisseling*, II, 73-76 (no. CXXVII).

45 Sabbe, *Briefwisseling*, II, 125-128 (no. CLVI).

46 ARB, RB, Secretarissen 3677, Register of privileges, 28 April 1672, fol. 27r. On basis of this register, it is unclear whether she requested the privilege or whether Schönwetter had already started the procedure before his death in January 1672. The request in ARB, RB, Secretarissen 2398, 28 April 1672, suggests that Schönwetter himself had started the procedure.

47 Hieronymus III Verdussen bought the privilege granted by the Spanish king to Jacob van Meurs for the works of Cornelis a Lapide in 1684: Van Rossem, *Het gevecht*, 61.

book written by Rota in 1675.<sup>48</sup> While lack of evidence prevents us from reconstructing the specific circumstances of the 1674 request, the fact that the Verdussens purchased the privilege two years later strongly suggests that the couple were pursuing a coherent business strategy rather than simply hoping to protect themselves when they applied for their requests, as the printing firm was suffering substantial financial difficulties. These different requests, registered by the secretary of the Council of Brabant under different names, have one common denominator: Maria Katharina Leux von Leuxenstein. These cases, then, illustrate the knowledge widowed women had of the workings of different institutions. Thanks to the trade connections with Antwerp publishers such as Moretus and Verdussen, the Schönwetter firm was aware of the working of the privileging system in the Habsburg Low Countries. Following the death of her first husband, Leux von Leuxenstein was the one who knew the procedures to apply to the Council of Brabant, using this knowledge to her advantage when the Verdussens were threatening to copy the work of her firm.

### *Scholarly Networks, Diplomats, and Privileges*

Foreign printers who had either personal or commercial connections to the Low Countries were far more successful in obtaining printing privileges. It was rare for complete outsiders to a local book market to obtain privileges successfully without any assistance from agents or other brokers. For example, when the Roman publisher Andrea Brugiotti wanted to request a twenty-year privilege from the Privy Council for the work of the Capuchin friar Francesco Longo a Coriolano, he wrote a letter to Cardinal Scipione Cobeluzzi for support.<sup>49</sup> The timing of his request may not have been a coincidence: Cobeluzzi, who headed the Vatican library, had just sent Paolo Rochetti as an agent to Brussels in order to find manuscripts and printed books for the library.<sup>50</sup> Rochetti thus acted as intermediary between a Roman bookseller, his patron, and the authorities in Brussels, and successfully lobbied the latter to obtain a privilege.

International-oriented publishers rarely relied on other actors within the printing trade, but rather resorted to their personal connections to scholarly-diplomats when seeking printing privileges from foreign rulers. An intriguing example is the Leiden-based publisher Franciscus Raphelengius, who in 1594 managed to obtain an extensive privilege from the French king Henry IV, one which prohibited French printers from selling, distributing, and printing newly composed works for ten years.<sup>51</sup> It is not unreasonable to assume that

<sup>48</sup> Riviere *Opera Medica Universa*. I have not found the official request for 1674, based on a note in ARB, RB, Secretarissen 3677, Register of privileges, June 1676, fol. 27. In this case, the secretary recorded this as a request made by the couple. For Rota, see ARB, RB, Secretarissen 2400, Petition 17 January 1675. Her third husband, Johann Melchior Bencard, submitted a request for Romani, *Totius Status Ecclesiastici*: ARB, RB, Secretarissen 3677, Register of privileges, 18 May 1688, fol. 98.

<sup>49</sup> In addition to his request, the dossier kept in ARB, GR 1277/131 contains his undated letter to Cardinal S. Susanna.

<sup>50</sup> See Borghese to Morra, Rome, 1 December 1618, and Morra to Borghese, Brussels 18 May 1619, in Van Meerbeeck (ed.), *Correspondance*, 335, 374.

<sup>51</sup> The French version is included in Scaliger, *Mesolabium*, and a shortened Latin version in Scaliger, *Cyclometrica*.

Raphelengius had been trying to argue his case by pointing to the privilege granted to his father-in-law Christophe Plantin by the French king in the sixteenth century, which had expired upon his death in 1589. The expiration of the privilege had an immediate impact on the international operations of Raphelengius in Leiden.<sup>52</sup> The text of this 1594 privilege granted to Raphelengius was included in Scaliger's *Mesolabium* – this was clearly a deliberate choice. The book was only Raphelengius's second publication of a work by Scaliger, who had taken up his new post at the University of Leiden a mere year earlier.<sup>53</sup> Based on the text of the privilege, Raphelengius was keen to protect his investments in acquiring new types for a new edition of Scaliger's *Opus de Emendatione Temporum*, which would appear in 1598.<sup>54</sup>

The French ambassador in The Hague, Paul Choart Buzanval, may have been responsible for obtaining this extensive privilege for Raphelengius.<sup>55</sup> As a learned diplomat, Buzanval soon established close contact with Raphelengius, borrowing as well as buying books from him.<sup>56</sup> Buzanval was also a friend of Scaliger's and subsequently praised Raphelengius's erudition and ability to produce any works of Scaliger's that might be forthcoming if the famous philologist decided to accept a position at the University of Leiden.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Buzanval obtained a privilege from Henry IV for Scaliger's second updated edition of Manilius, financed by the Amsterdam-based publisher Jan Commelin.<sup>58</sup> During his time in the Dutch Republic, the French ambassador's involvement in requesting French privileges continued: in 1600, Buzanval again wrote to Nicolas de Villeroy, the French secretary of state, for a printing privilege. In this letter, he added that the publishers were not keen on disseminating the book yet, as the privilege of the Holy Roman Emperor had not yet arrived.

In the case of Scaliger's works, these letters and the various privileges illustrate that the stakes were high, and that Dutch publishers wanted to make absolutely sure they obtained the necessary protections against cheaper pirated editions. In their desire to obtain the best possible protection, Dutch publishers preferred to have an erudite representative of the French crown to obtain a privilege on their behalf rather than to submit a request themselves. Using personal connections with diplomats allowed them to bypass formal procedures. The granting of privileges were thus part of exchanges of favour and friendship within the Republic of Letters.

Buzanval's actions were not isolated. In 1627, Judith des Lesmaries, a printer based in Geneva and head of the La Rovièrè printing house, requested and obtained a twelve-year privilege from the States-General for Scaliger's *Opus de emendatione temporum*.<sup>59</sup> Her

52 De Lantsheer, 'An Author and his Printer', 16-29.

53 Raphelengius's first publication of a work by Scaliger was *Epistola*.

54 Scaliger, *Mesolabium*.

55 De Smet, 'Paul Choart de Buzanval'.

56 Amsterdam, Allard Pierson, OTM: hs. A134:a-b, Buzanval to Raphelengius, The Hague, 1 March 1592 and 21 July 1599. In these two letters, Buzanval thanks him for sending specific books and orders titles from his shop or from the Frankfurt fair, such as a new edition of Lipsius bound in 1592 and Lindschoten in Latin in 1599.

57 Botley and Van Miert (eds.), *The Correspondence*, II, 281-285.

58 Buzanval to Villeroy, 1 May and 12 June 1599, in Vreede (ed.), *Lettres et négociations*, 157, 205. Henry IV granted the privilege to Commelin on 21 May 1599; Scaliger, *Astronomicon*.

59 Nijenhuis (ed.), *Besluiten Staten-Generaal*, 2 October 1627.

request was supported by Giovanni Diodati, an important Genevan-born Calvinist theologian, who had been sent as an envoy to the Synod of Dordt by the Republic of Geneva almost a decade earlier.<sup>60</sup> Diodati had played a crucial role during the synod: he was elected as one of the six members to draft the canons. He thus had the necessary connections in the Dutch Republic to influence a positive decision on behalf of des Lesmaries. Indeed, foreign agents often played a crucial role in securing privileges: they not only acted on behalf of famous international scholars such as Scaliger, or of well-established Genevan publishing houses, but also aided far less-known individuals such as local schoolteachers. In 1608, for example, Matthieu Brûlart de Berny, the French ambassador in Brussels, obtained a ten-year privilege from Henry IV for all the books by William Colson, an exiled English Catholic who ran a private school in language and mathematics in Brussels aimed primarily at adults.<sup>61</sup> This was a personal favour by the ambassador: Colson had taught his son arithmetic in three weeks.<sup>62</sup> Colson did not hesitate to use this approval of the French king: when petitioning the Privy Council for an extension of his privilege in the Habsburg Netherlands, he referred to the privilege of the French king as well as the Prince-Elector of Liège.<sup>63</sup> The approval of two foreign rulers must have added some weight to this case: the Privy Council granted him a six-year privilege for nine different educational titles, either grammar or mathematical books.<sup>64</sup> That these different privileges lent prestige to a work is clear from the 1612 edition of one of his mathematical books in English, printed in London at his own expense, which advertised that it was printed with both a royal and archducal privilege.<sup>65</sup> The archducal privilege had no jurisdictional power in London or the British Isles, and at the time of increased anti-Catholicism, Colson was keen to promote his reputation as an experienced teacher.

### *Privileges as Power Play*

In these early seventeenth-century cases, personal relationships between ambassadors, authors, and printers were paramount in facilitating requests for printing privileges. In later instances, diplomats do not seem to have taken the initiative themselves, but rather they were instructed to act by their rulers or state to assist in such cases. The role of ambassadors in censoring unwanted publications has been noted by scholars, but their involvement in securing privileges has hitherto gone completely unnoticed.<sup>66</sup> Yet, these request for privileges were also one of the ways in which ambassadors gauged the

60 Fornerod, 'A reappraisal'.

61 ARB, GR 1276/288, Petition 21 July 1609. On Colson, see Hoven, 'La vie errante'.

62 The dossier also contains a document which provides attestations of his good faith, teaching method, and an overview of his twenty-nine pupils. For the son of the ambassador see ARB, GR 1276/288, Attestations, fol. 337r.

63 Colson had submitted an earlier request for twelve years: ARB, GR 1276/269, Petition 13 July 1602.

64 ARB, GR 1276/288, List of titles, fol. 338r.

65 Colson, *A General treasury*. The copy kept at the British Library (shelf mark 529.c.14) contains a handwritten note by Colson which suggests the book was given as a present to James I/VI. This work was also printed in Lille in 1613 by his son, including the mention 'avec permission royal & archiducal' on the title page.

66 Koopmans, *Early Modern Media*, 282-302.

international standing of their country or ruler. In March 1670, for instance, Matthias Romswinkel, the extraordinary envoy of Brandenburg, read a *memorie* (proposal) to the States-General about Johannes Brunnemann, a professor of Law at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder. Brunnemann had recently composed a work for 'the public good' and had already obtained a privilege from the Holy Roman Emperor. Referring to the States-General as 'lovers of jurisprudence', the envoy requested a ten-year privilege for the work to be given to Johann Michael Pabst and the heirs of Hiob Wilhelm Fintel in Frankfurt an der Oder.<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, requesting protection for a Latin scholarly work in the Dutch Republic was aimed at making sure that Dutch publishers would not reprint the work unauthorised.<sup>68</sup> It was a necessary step, as several publishing firms had expanded their operations on an international scale by establishing bookshops outside the Dutch Republic, such as the Blaeus in Vienna.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, international politics were at play here. Brandenburg was a rising power with close personal, political, and military ties to the Dutch Republic, but the Great Elector was increasingly being courted by French ambassadors, who hoped he would join an alliance against the Dutch.<sup>70</sup> In many ways, it would have been unwise for the States-General to refuse the request that came from the Brandenburg's extraordinary envoy, as the Dutch needed support from Brandenburg on the international stage.

The focus in scholarship hitherto has been on the Dutch dominance of the fairs in the Holy Roman Empire and their ruthless reputation for reprinting. From the 1670s onwards, however, during a time of war with France and increasing international competition within the book market, Dutch printers turned to the States-General for assistance in gaining protection from foreign printers pirating their works. In early 1676 Daniel Elsevier had heard rumours from a few citizens in Geneva that his French Bible was going to be reprinted. Elsevier had spent a not inconsiderable amount of money on this work, which was first printed in 1669. He had already bought the various Dutch privileges from the Bible's compilers, Samuel des Marets and his son Henri, Professor of Theology in Groningen and minister in Delft, respectively.<sup>71</sup> In 1670, claiming that he needed to secure his considerable investment, Elsevier had obtained a six-year privilege from the Small Council (*Petit Conseil*) of the Republic of Geneva.<sup>72</sup> Now, with his first Genevan privilege nearing the end of its term, and somewhat alarmed by the rumours of upcoming pirated editions, the Amsterdam-based publisher immediately requested the assistance of the States-General to apply for an extension of his Genevan privilege and request a new one in Bern.<sup>73</sup> He seemed keen

67 The privilege of States-General was included on the title page of the edition of Brunnemann, *Commentarius*. See further NA, SG 3281, Resolution 13 March 1670, fol. 189. The *memorie* is kept at NA, SG 11139, 13 March 1670, fol. 180. For more on Romswinkel, see Schutte, *Repertorium*, 340-342.

68 Approval of request by the States of Holland dated 24 March 1670 in NA, States of Holland 1623.

69 See also Pettegree, 'The Dutch Baltic'.

70 McKay, 'Small-power diplomacy', 202-203.

71 On Samuel Maresius, see *Biografisch Lexicon*, I, 158-160. Based on the extracts of privileges included in *La Sainte Bible* (copy kept at Amsterdam, Allard Pierson, shelf mark OL 63-1846,1847).

72 Geneva, Archives d'état (hereafter AEG), Registres du Conseil (hereafter R.C.) 170, Resolution 5 March 1670, 111.

73 NA, SG 3293, Resolution, 18 February 1676, fol. 138v.

to stifle any competition from Swiss publishers. The States-General were willing to assist and wrote favourable letters to the Bern and Geneva city councils on Elsevier's behalf.<sup>74</sup>

To protect the interests of their publishers and booksellers, the States-General relied upon its representatives abroad. In this specific case it was their resident agent in Basel, Malapert, who was instructed to act in favour of Elsevier.<sup>75</sup> Malapert wrote and translated documents to and from the councils and dispatched them to the States-General. The city council of Bern, according to Malapert, was not inclined to assist as the privilege was granted by Geneva and therefore claimed that it did not have any jurisdictional authority in their territory. Malapert nevertheless urged the council to defer the matter for a while, hoping that postponing a decision would work in Elsevier's favour.<sup>76</sup> The Genevan council first rejected the claims that one of their publishers was printing an edition of the *Sainte Bible*.<sup>77</sup> Yet in the end they also recognised the importance of granting favours in maintaining their friendly relationship with the Dutch Republic, writing in their letter 'but to make your Highnesses aware of the desire we have to grant them everything that may depend on our authority'.<sup>78</sup> They were willing to prolong Elsevier's privilege for another three years, even if this extension was detrimental to the business of their own printers.

Daniel Elsevier was able to keep such a close watch on the international market thanks to a network of printers and booksellers who sent him information. In a letter to the English secretary of state Joseph Williamson in 1674, Elsevier claimed that European printers considered 'reprinting as something low, which happens more often than it should'.<sup>79</sup> He explained that a decade earlier, Wilhelm Stock, a Frankfurt printer, had not just counterfeited one of his works, but to make matters worse, had requested and obtained an imperial privilege for that same work.<sup>80</sup> For Elsevier, a line had been crossed. Despite not having good relations with the emperor at the time, he claimed that he had brought his case to the imperial court: Stock had been fined, and Elsevier had been granted the privilege.<sup>81</sup> In this case, Elsevier may have relied on the assistance of Alexander Hartung, a merchant and publisher who ran the Blaeu shop in Vienna.<sup>82</sup> Hartung had both the knowledge of the

74 NA, SG 6137, contains the minutes of the letters written on 18 February 1676.

75 For more on Malapert, see Schutte, *Repertorium*, 178.

76 NA, SG 6137, Malapert to States-General, Basel, 28 March 1676. His letter also contains the Dutch translation of the letter sent by the Bern City Council to the States-General.

77 AEG, R.C. 176, Resolutions 7 and 27 March 1676, 77, 98.

78 NA, SG 6137, Genevan city council to States-General, Geneva, 21 April 1676: 'Mais pour cognoistre a vos Alteesses le desir que nous avons de leur agreer en tout ce qui peut dependre de nostre autorite.'

79 Cited in Kleerkoper, *Boekhandel*, I, 209: 'Il est compte pour un espece de Larein de se contrefaire les uns les autres, ce qui arrive pourtant plus qu'il ne debvroit.'

80 Curtius, *Historia Alexandri*. In 1668 Stock had obtained a privilege from Leopold I: Koppitz, *Die kaiserlichen*, 527.

81 We only have Elsevier's word as these privileges have not survived or been found so far. He may have received the privilege for a while, but his competitor Stock in Frankfurt re-applied for a five-year privilege for this specific work in 1678, 1685, and 1691: Koppitz, *Die kaiserlichen*, 527-528.

82 Elsevier, together with Blaeu, had obtained an imperial ten-year privilege in 1662 for an edition of Godefroy's *Corpus iuris civilis*: see Koppitz, *Die kaiserlichen*, 45. They must have sold this privilege, as there is no edition under their name. A year later, a conglomerate of Frankfurt publishers produced an edition of this work with an imperial privilege.



procedures and the contacts at the imperial court necessary to obtain privileges.<sup>83</sup> The case with Stock in 1668 must have alerted Elsevier to the importance of obtaining imperial privileges: between 1673 and 1675 his publications of several classical authors (Tacitus, Livy, and Seneca) as well as Descartes were protected for ten to twelve years.<sup>84</sup> Elsevier knew how to navigate the system as he had the necessary contacts and connections, making it altogether significant that he decided to request the help of the States-General in 1676 with Geneva and Bern.

In the quest for protection against piracy – primarily for learned Latin publications, which were always intended for international distribution – foreign publishers regularly sought the support of the Holy Roman Emperor. It shows that they understood the importance of legal bodies regulating printing and privilege infringement. Imperial privileges were valid in the entire territory of the Holy Roman Empire; especially relevant for the two major bi-annual book fairs in Leipzig and Frankfurt, which were crucial centres for international book exchanges in the seventeenth century.<sup>85</sup> In some cases, imperial privileges had a special provision: it allowed for the recipient of the privilege to confiscate unauthorised copies themselves without having committed a crime. This measure was an advantage for publishers active at the Frankfurt and Leipzig fairs, and this was not only the case for famous learned publishers such as Daniel Elsevier but also applied to less prominent local booksellers and printers in the Dutch Republic. To cite one example, in 1686 the Utrecht booksellers Meinardus van Dreunen and Willem van Walchren submitted a request to the States-General for assistance.<sup>86</sup> They explained they had recently published the entire medical work of IJsbrand Diemerbroeck, professor of medicine and anatomy in Utrecht, and had obtained fifteen-year privilege from both the province of Holland and Utrecht for their edition. They had sent their new edition to be sold at the Frankfurt fair, but to their surprise, due to the efforts of the Genevan printer Samuel de Tournes, their copies of Diemerbroeck's work had not been unpacked and thus remained unsold. This Genevan publisher claimed he had obtained an imperial privilege for the different texts of Diemerbroeck.<sup>87</sup> De Tournes was incredibly successful in reprinting medical and scientific works by eminent authors and often reprinted editions from the Dutch Republic, actions which the two Utrecht booksellers, just like Elsevier a decade earlier, condemned as 'unjust' and an 'encroachment of another's right'.<sup>88</sup> De Tournes, however, cleverly used the power of his imperial privilege to claim he was the only one with the right to sell it at the fair and thus prevent his Dutch competitors from selling their copies. The two Utrecht booksellers asserted that de Tournes had abused the privilege of the emperor, as he was not entitled to request a privilege on pirated work to begin with. In their petition to the States-General the two Utrecht booksellers requested the assistance of Gerard Hamel Bruyninx, the Dutch ambassador in Vienna, in pleading their case against De Tournes and to obtain a

83 As is evident from the correspondence of Willem van der Goes in Vienna: Gonnet, *Briefwisseling*, 230-231.

84 Koppitz, *Die kaiserlichen*, 108-109.

85 Maclean, *Scholarship*, 137-139.

86 NA, SG 7525, Petition by Van Dreunen and Van Walcheren to the States-General, 5 June 1686. Their request was copied almost verbatim into the resolutions: NA, SG 3313, Resolution 5 June 1686, fol. 671r.

87 He had obtained a ten-year privilege from the emperor in 1679: Koppitz, *Die kaiserlichen*, 547.

88 On De Tournes, see Maclean, *Episodes*, 234-238.



fifteen-year privilege from the Holy Roman Emperor for Diemerbroeck's *Opera Omnia*. Unfortunately for the two publishers, Bruyninx was in the Dutch Republic at the time and therefore unable to lobby on their behalf at the imperial court. In 1687, Samuel de Tournes reprinted Diemerbroeck's entire work – I have not found traces of further litigation.<sup>89</sup>

Elsevier and the two Utrecht booksellers were not the only printers in the Dutch Republic to need help from the States-General in requesting foreign privileges to secure their publication projects from foreign, and above all Genevan, competition. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Dutch publishers seem to have been more acutely aware of the need to protect their publications. In 1689, with the start of the Nine Years' War, the booksellers Arnout and Reinier Leers submitted a request to the States-General. The brothers claimed that copies of their newly published *Dictionnaire universel*, written by Antoine Furetière, could not reach France due to war in the region; they were afraid Genevan publishers might take advantage of this opportunity.<sup>90</sup> As in the earlier cases discussed in this article, the States-General agreed to assist in requesting a fifteen-year privilege from Geneva to protect their booksellers. Along with their letter of support, the States attached their privilege granted to the publication, and their strategy seems to have worked: the Genevan city council voted in favour of granting the two brothers a privilege.<sup>91</sup> Given the success of their strategy, the Leers brothers submitted another request a year later, this time asking the States-General to write to the Protestant Swiss Cantons at Arrau for a fifteen-year privilege.<sup>92</sup> Due to their proximity to France and growing worries over French control, both the Genevan Republic and the Protestant Swiss Cantons might have agreed to these requests. Such favours were a crucial part of alliances and negotiations between states, even when it was being granted by a foreign authority to a private individual.

### Conclusion

Even the most well-connected of international publishers, such as Reinier Leers at the end of the seventeenth century, would, in extreme circumstances, try to get support from their own government for settling their trade issues and further their commercial interests. Leers had excellent contacts with the French monarchy and supplied the government with books, yet he contacted François Fagel, clerk of the States-General, and the Dutch ambassador in Paris, Coenraad van Heemskerck, to plead on his behalf to obtain official permission for the import of *Dictionnaire universel* into France.<sup>93</sup> Van Heemskerck seems to have been unsuccessful to persuade the French authorities, as the relationship between France and

<sup>89</sup> I checked Hamel's correspondence with the States-General in 1687 (NA, SG 6167-6169) and with Grand Pensionary Fagel (NA, Raadspensionaris Fagel 276 and 293-294) and from the Holy Roman Empire in 1686 (NA, SG, 12584.217), but did not come across any reference to this case.

<sup>90</sup> Reinier was active in Rotterdam, his brother Arnout in The Hague: Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers*.

<sup>91</sup> AEG, R.C. 189, Resolutions 19 November and 22 November 1689, 438, 445. See also NA, SG 3320, Resolution 7 November 1689, fol. 700.

<sup>92</sup> NA, SG 3321, Resolution 14 March 1690, fol. 415v.

<sup>93</sup> Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers*, 73; NA, Coenraad van Heemskerck 518, Reinier Leers from Rotterdam, 6 October 1700; Letter by Fagel on behalf of Leers from The Hague, 22 September 1700 requesting Heemskerck's assistance.

the Dutch Republic grew increasingly hostile. On the eve of the Spanish War of Succession, Louis XIV and his state secretaries were not willing to grant the Dutch any favours.

The state of the book trade is mostly treated as isolated from international politics, but as we have seen, the granting of privileges by institutions or rulers to a foreign printer or publisher was highly susceptible to the influence of contemporary relations between states. The role of ambassadors in securing printing privileges remains largely unexplored territory and requires further attention. It is crucial to understand the wider patterns of cooperation between international publishers and political agents. It allows to dispel the notion that Dutch politics did not concern itself with publishing. On the contrary, when required to do so, the Dutch state and its agents abroad took a very active role to secure its reputation within international politics. From the evidence gathered here, printers of the Habsburg Low Countries seem to have lacked such support when compared to their Dutch counterparts. Their more limited ability to secure similar levels of protection as their Dutch counterparts managed may have placed these printers at a disadvantage on the international book market. It certainly offered them fewer opportunities to buy and sell privileges on the international market, a strategy which was clearly pursued by some of the Frankfurt printing firms.

While in their requests publishers and printers claimed to want to secure their investments, this article has demonstrated that to obtain privileges a connection to the Low Countries was key, either through personal ties or commercial connections. More generally, requesting privileges from multiple authorities was not the norm for printers. Printers had different ways of dealing with their competitors and only occasionally used printing privileging against their trading partners or competitors. Yet the cases discussed here do suggest that these transnational requests warrant our attention. These printing privileges offered an opportunity to experiment with how print could be regulated across borders. Surveying the privileges submitted both in the Habsburg Netherlands and the Dutch Republic reveals a predominance of printers from the German-speaking territories and the importance of Frankfurt am Main as a trading depot throughout the seventeenth century. The type of books for which privileges were commonly requested were typically large scholarly editions or religious works predominantly in Latin. Because these titles were aimed at an international audience, and thus to circulate across political and linguistic borders, it makes more sense to request printing privileges from multiple authorities for these works. Studying cross-border privileges highlights the competitive nature of the European printing industry, where securing a privilege not only provided legal protection, but also conferred a mark of quality and exclusivity on the printer's work. The presence of printing privileges from different states on title pages signalled to colleagues and competitors that one had access to powerful networks and connections.

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