Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

Sly, Jordan S. The Recusant Print Network Project (Beta). Illustrating Print Network with Data-Driven Visualizations (c. 1558–1640)

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See table of contents

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of letters looked like. Mapping the Republic of Letters has produced a useful tool for visualizing data in Palladio, and the documentation and data of some of their published projects may provide helpful guidance to those pursuing similar types of research, while the projects and publications are important contributions to their fields.

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The Recusant Print Network Project, currently in Beta, is an early modern history resource which was generated to ascertain the effectiveness of the recusant printer network through data-driven visualizations of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century imprint information. The recusant print network was an important counter-publication network that covertly produced, printed, and circulated illicit Catholic books into England, which relied upon printers in Europe as well as in England. Recusancy was the legal term predominantly used against Catholics and dissenting Protestants who refused to conform to the rites of the Church of England from the accession of Queen Elizabeth I across the rest of the early modern period. Catholic recusants were often fined and imprisoned for their religious nonconformity, and thus they depended upon printers who were willing to produce works that could be smuggled into England and into the homes of Catholic readers for religious piety and intellectual discussions. This was a highly perilous operation, which saw printers having to produce works in secret by altering their locations (for instance, many London printers would advertise that their works were printed in Paris or Douai), and they would often use pseudonyms to protect their identities.

The project was born from the desire of history librarian and doctoral student Jordan S. Sly (University of Maryland, College Park) to help us appreciate how visualizations of early modern title pages can illuminate aspects

of the imprint information of the recusant print network at the height of "high-recusancy," concentrating on the years 1558 to 1640. The question of who printed a pamphlet, treatise, or essay, for example, found evidence in details such as the name of the printer, the location, and the year of publication. Sly investigated whether any new insight could be realized in the field of early modern recusant history by collating, analyzing, and graphically displaying this information—thus removing the impediments of shelf-bound books and their physical geography. The aim of The Recusant Print Network Project, therefore, was to significantly enhance our knowledge of recusant printing practices by assessing whether data analysis, data collation, and visualization can help public users discern trends and anomalies in the compiled data, as well as to move towards new methodologies of approaching book history.

The unique selling point of the project's website is that it allows users to scrutinize datasets by providing visualizations of the data regarding English print locations to track printers of multiple recusant publications. This is especially useful for early modern book historians who try to track down the mobility of books from the printer to private libraries. In the "Visualizations" section, users are given an overview of how the data were compiled and how the data visualizations are structured for ease of navigation. Users can click and zoom in on separate external pages to closely analyze the data. The "English Recusant Literature Printing Network" datasets show the clusters of information concerning traceable printers and their printing rates. The information remarkably shows that while there is a sharp "drop-off" in printers who produced more than three recusant works, a small percentage of printers had a large print output of between nine and twenty-one works, including John Day, Felix Kingston, and William Jones, which indicates there were some prominent printers distributing recusant literature. Another visualization attempts to rectify "false imprint" information, which is one of the chief obstacles when analyzing recusant literature in this period. Catholicism was a persecuted minority faith in early modern England, and distribution of Catholic works was subject to confiscation and harsh penalties for printers and distributors. Therefore, printers would often falsify their names and locations in their imprints. Sly found that many of these figures worked either within the Jesuit printing mission or as part of the English Catholic community, which exposes the wider networks of different Catholic factions that were interested in the distribution and circulation of these texts. A graph additionally illustrates text mining of the key terms

"recusant," "recusants," "church papists," and "clandestine Catholics," revealing how such jargon, which peaked in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had fallen dramatically by the turn of the twentieth century. The findings are currently preliminary as the project is incomplete. Nevertheless, the data so far has proffered potential leads for further research, when the project resumes, into tracing names that frequently occur in these imprints—and their association in early modern recusant literature.

One of the positives about the website is that it gives public users a reading list of primary and secondary material, which is especially useful for those who have limited knowledge of the period or topic. The site provides two articles in the "essays" section that deliver brief overviews on recusant literature. The essay "'To the True Catholick Reader': The Immediacy of Instruction in Early Modern Literature" explores the reception of two recusant printed treatises across opposite ends of the timeframe: *A Most Excellent Treatise of the Begynning of Heresyes* (1565), and *The Progenie of Catholicks and Protestants* (1633). Here, users can read about the public and private receptions of these two works, their target audiences, and how the works instructed early modern Catholics. Further, the essay discusses the aims of the Jesuit mission in spreading its message across such texts. Sly's historiographical essay "Recusancy and Female Jesuitresses: A Historiographical Essay on Early Modern English Catholicism" is also accessible on the website, which gives a synopsis of the study of recusancy and early modern English Catholicism since the second half of the twentieth century. The essay analyzes the key contributors to the historiography, including John Bossy, Christopher Haigh, Hugh Aveling, Eamon Duffy, Marie Rowlands, Alexandra Walsham, Peter Lake, and Michael Questier.

Remarkably, Sly's essay treats the female contribution to this recusant literature seriously by giving attention to female agency, which has sometimes not been granted the full-scale attention it deserves. Women's contributions to print culture have often been underestimated; this was a period of increased literacy and significant female readership of religious texts. Women were thus an important audience for printers and writers of religious works, especially lay women who would use the printed books as their guides for spiritual piety. Sly points out that female agency was also dangerous due to the risks associated with Catholicism, at a time when it was illegal to practise the faith in England. Sly utilizes the current historiographical debate surrounding female readership and agency by arguing that these religious texts allowed female devotion to

develop intellectually and religiously, which greatly influenced early modern print culture. Among his examples, he cites the words of female authors Dorothy Lawson, Mary Ward, and Margaret Clitherow, whose works still have a literary impact today in the study of female religious piety and mysticism. Sly contends that Mary Ward's *Ratio Instituti* was scrutinized by both Protestant and Catholic officials over her plan to educate her female spiritual advisors in Europe on the long-term plan to re-establish Catholicism in England. Although the project is currently on a hiatus, Sly's treatment of female agency in our understanding of early modern print culture shows where the project may lead to next—especially as female readers and scholars often translated religious texts, which helped keep recusant print culture alive.

Overall, The Recusant Print Network Project is a straightforward overview of the importance of studying printers and their contribution to early modern recusant literature and book history. Visual examples of these imprints would greatly benefit the project's website, especially when research resumes in the future. Public users who are unfamiliar with the early modern period or possess limited knowledge of the topic may find it useful to see how this information was laid out physically on the page. Although the data findings are currently incomplete, the datasets and text mining give us a glimpse into the wide-scale operation of recusant print networks during this highly volatile period. This project would be beneficial for researchers and scholars who are looking for certain printers and their print paper trails. The datasets on false imprints are also significant for scholars interested in underground Catholic networks. Equally, this website will be of great value to members of the public interested in recusant history and in book production.

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