

Centre for the History of Renaissance Knowledge

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology
Polish Academy of Sciences

Issue 1

Autumn 2022

p. 2

*Newsletter -
what is its aim?*

p. 3

Fellows at the Centre

p. 4

Projects at the Centre

p. 5

*The "fashion for method"
in the 16th and 17th century*

p. 7

*What is it that matters
to you as a scholar?*

p. 9

*Meet our team
- Valentina Lepri*

p. 11

Our calendar



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Welcome!

Hello everyone and welcome to the new newsletter of our **Centre for the History of Renaissance Knowledge**, a unit of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

We are scholars from **all corners of Europe**, and our research focus is **the history of knowledge in the early modern age**. This is a rich and complex ground of investigation, a history made by great thinkers, as anonymous figures who left in their documents and also in the objects they created evidence of their knowledge. We are so eager to tell everyone about our activity and our findings. With the newsletter we hope to reach as many people as possible, not necessarily experts in the subject, but all those interested in that moment in European history when man shined for **enterprisingness and creativity**, giving posterity scientific and geographical discoveries, artistic masterpieces, texts and thoughts that still move to reflections.

Valentina Lepri

(PI of the project & Head of the Centre)



Among many of the events that take place at the Centre I especially cherish our face-to-face meetings.

In October 2021, after months of pandemic, we finally launched them with the first one taking place in Warsaw. These two pictures were taken exactly then.



Many more of our meetings are yet to come!

(A few words about that will appear in the next issue, winter 2023).

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Newsletter - what is its aim?

Why do we start a newsletter after 2 years since our ERC KnowStudents project has commenced? Many may wonder. Well, honestly speaking - many of us wondered as well.

The timing may not be the best as well as it may be exactly right. During these two years we built a team and launched the project, searched through archives and libraries, traveled and met online, conducted our duties and faced a decent amount of obstacles, wrote shorter and longer, smaller and bigger paragraphs, articles, and book chapters, shared laughter, joy, and coffees. The goal of our project became clarified and took various turns, once again showing us how (un)predictable research can be.

Dissemination is quite an essential part of our work. Not only do we want to share our findings with the widest audience possible (regardless of their age, specialization and work expertise, or familiarity with the research ground of the Centre) but we also wish to learn how to do it effectively, to discover new routes of this venture, to learn (together with you!) which content appeals to you, which form you consider attractive, and ultimately - how to grab your attention for a little bit longer. It is not an easy task but oh, how fascinating! However (un)believable you think it is, I really find the dissemination task to be astonishing and challenging, bringing me a great deal of satisfaction (with a slightly smaller amount of frustration 😊).

So here we are, coming back to the main question - **what is the aim of our Newsletter?** We want to go beyond its definition of 'a document containing information about the recent activities of an organization (here: our Centre), sent regularly to the organization's members (here: to anyone interested in its content and activities done at the Centre)' [Cambridge Dictionary, November 7, 2022]. Much of our work can be already found on our social media (see bottom left!) yet not everything ends up there. We still have much more to talk about and present to you and we consider this newsletter to be yet another means to do so. Whether it was a good decision - time will tell. And so will you as we hope (and would appreciate) to have your feedback.

Dear reader, set out with us on this journey, you will enjoy it!

Katarzyna Rusinek-Abarca
(Research Promoter)

The Ulam Programme - Seal of Excellence

is a special application track for researchers who have obtained the [Seal of Excellence](#) certificate under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Individual Fellowships programme of the European Commission.



Luisa Brotto

Her research interests are early modern political theories, ethics, and history of education.

More about her profile can be found [here](#).

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Fellows at the Centre

The aim of my project is retracing different conceptions of social trust in Early modern European political culture by focusing on a unique and yet representative case-study. The documentary basis of my research consists of the **extant writings regarding the educational activities at the Academy of Zamość**. Founded in 1594 by Chancellor Jan Zamoyski, this university was an original educational experiment since its goal was to provide the future ruling class of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with an effective political education. I am investigating mostly **manuscripts from the early decades of the 17th century** containing notes of the courses held at the Academy and focusing mainly on **ancient history, politics, and law**. Through visits to the Polish National Library, in the first months of my stay in Warsaw, I explored the writings of students and teachers at the Academy. Now, at a more advanced stage, I am isolating passages that convey political teachings (with special emphasis on the notion of trust). I aim to ascertain what notions and sources became part of the educational program at Zamość, to show how classical and early modern European references were adapted to the political discourse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. When exploring the documents of the Academy of Zamość, I can delve into the life of a small Renaissance university that was also an interesting laboratory for social theories and concepts. What is more, I am carrying out a research on the history of ideas while also taking into account the material features of the manuscripts and their possible theoretical relevance.

As a *NAWA Ulam Programme - Seal of Excellence* fellow based at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, I conduct my work on a daily basis in the study rooms of IFiS PAN, thus benefiting from the collaborative atmosphere at the Centre for the History of Renaissance Knowledge and the precious advice of my supervisor, Professor Danilo Facca.

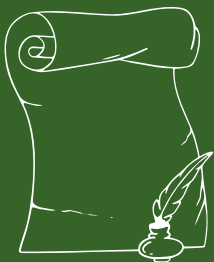
My experience as IFiS PAN has led me to expand my knowledge of Renaissance culture and methodology of inquiry, thus laying the basis for future research projects. Since the beginning of my stay in Poland, I have been studying the Polish language. **"Krok po kroku"** I am making some progress! Knowledge of the Polish language is useful in daily life and especially in my work since many interesting books and articles are available in Polish.

Luisa Brotto

(NAWA Ulam Programme - Seal of Excellence)

Narodowy Program Rozwoju Humanistyki (NPRH)

is a program created within Ministry of Education and Science in 2011, supplementing the Polish grant program towards the humanist circles with the possibility of financing projects that cannot be financed under the statutory objectives of institutions such as the National Science Centre and The National Centre for Research and Development, and in competitions from European funds.



TEAM

Dr. Alicja Bielak
(IFiS PAN)

Jan Błoński
(European University Institute)

Dr. Wojciech Kordyżon
(University of Warsaw)

Prof. Krzysztof Mrowcewicz
(PAN)

Tomasz Płóciennik
(University of Warsaw)

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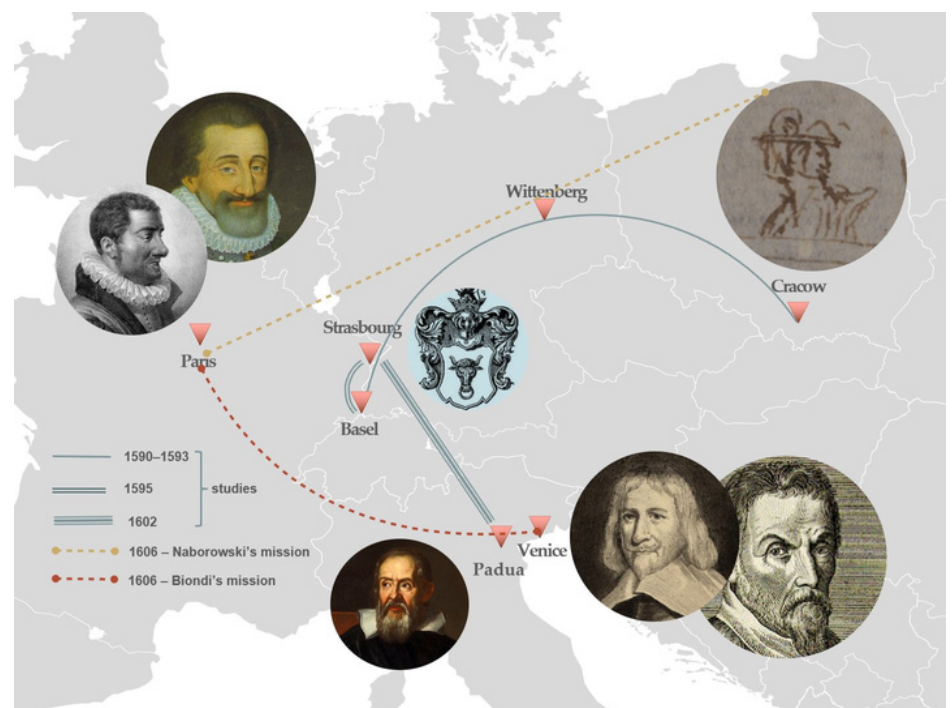
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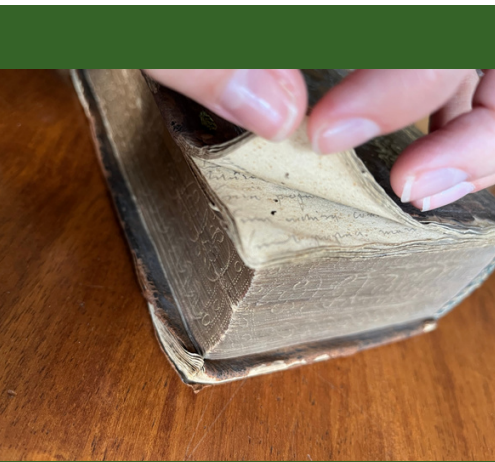
Projects at the Centre

The main goal of the project *Poet, Physician, and Diplomat at the Court of the Radziwiłł family. Critical edition of Daniel Naborowski's correspondence (Poeta, medyk, dyplomata na dworze Radziwiłłów. Edycja krytyczna korespondencji. Daniela Naborowskiego* financed by the Narodowy Program Rozwoju Humanistyki – NPRH) is to **collect and publish a critical edition of Daniel Naborowski's (1573-1640) correspondence in two forms**: the traditional printed edition and the TEI standard.

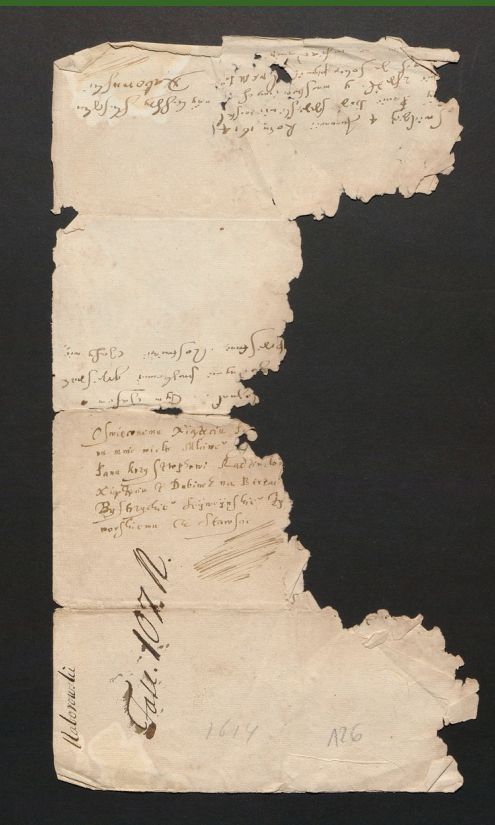
The focus on Naborowski's three scenes of activity (literature, medicine, diplomacy) is intended to show his broad interests and network of contacts. Today, this figure is mainly associated with his poetry, which did not receive publication in his time. After studying law and medicine in Wittenberg, Basel, Orleans, and Padua, he devoted himself to diplomatic service for the Radziwiłł family. By following his contacts and travels, one can see in his letters and poems the influence of the new poetics and scientific ideas, which he had the chance to learn during his studies and diplomatic missions. A careful analysis of Naborowski's network and travel trajectory will shed **new light on his intellectual life and**, more broadly, **on the transfer of knowledge** that takes place through such figures.



Visualization of the research on Naborowski's network.



Hidden notes in the binding of a book studied by Alicja during her archival mission in Cracow in September...



...and one of the most destroyed letters of Naborowski, impossible to reconstruct unless a copy is found.

The team started to transcribe letters of Naborowski held in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie). We have already prepared 35 letters, but sadly some of them look more like Rorschach drawings than linear text, so grasping the sense out of them is impossible. Hopefully the upcoming missions will bring new discoveries and maybe some extra copies of letters that will enable us to fill the gaps

Between 18th and 23th September Alicja conducted **first archival mission within the project**. Her main destination was Jagiellonian Library in Cracow. In the binding of one of the books she found some hidden notes that can be useful for the project's development. If it will be possible to read them by decomposing the binding? Who wrote them? We will see in upcoming months.

Alicja Bielak

(Postdoctoral Researcher)

The “fashion for method” in the 16th and 17th century

...the current reflections of our researchers

Logic was a central subject in early modern education. Whereas today, we do not systematically study in school how our arguments are formed, and how the different fields of our knowledge relate to each other, it was an important field of study for early modern intellectuals. **Concepts and notions had to be defined in order to be used**, and these were part of a system, in which the rules of **the thinking process were formalized**. But how is it possible to make a system out of case law? Or out of all the plants of the world? Or from the different species of animals? **How to gain new theoretical knowledge from existing phenomena? The keyword became ‘methodus’,** i.e. *method*, which was supposed to guide the student through the ever growing and almost unlimited quantity of information that became available at once for everyone through the revolution of printing. After 1550, the courses of logic started to deal not only with the formal rules of logic, but also with the *methods* of thinking and discovery: analytical and synthetic (Ramus), compositive and resolute (Zabarella’s *regressus-method*), and many others.

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Pages of the notebook studied by Farkas

"Short and succinct summary of logic from Zabarella, Regius, Gregor Horst, and other philosophers in the school of Martinopolis, proposed on September 17, 1612" which is held in the University Library of the Eötvös Loránd University.



In the University Library of the Eötvös Loránd University, there survives a **notebook on logic from 1612**. The title refers to a "Short and succinct summary of logic from Zabarella, Regius, Gregor Horst, and other philosophers in **the school of Martinopolis**, proposed on September 17, 1612." (ELTE University Library, ms. F 8). Towards the end of the notebook, on p. 203, we find a further segment which deals with the "Logic of Philip Melanchthon, summarized by Lucas Lossius", adding annotations to it in 1613 ("In Logicam Philippi Melanchthonis a Luca Lossio contractam collectanea et annotationes propositae in schola Martinopoliensi Anno 1613. Totius quasi philosophiae introductionem prolegomena.") It is clear that the teacher, who made this concise summary of logic and methodology, taught his 'methods of thinking' in a Protestant school – but **which city exactly is Martinopolis?** As the manuscript survives in a library of Budapest, **one would naturally think of a school in the Kingdom of Hungary**. Martinopolis was a **widely used Latin name of the city of Martin, now in Slovakia**. The town was the property of the Révay family, who were Lutheran, and the notebook refers to Lutheran professors as Philipp Melanchthon and Gregor Horst. But Martin was a small town, and there is no trace of a larger school in this period, where philosophy would have been taught at such an advanced level.

It is much more probable that Martinopolis appears here as the **Latinized name of the city of Merseburg, located halfway between the strongholds of Lutheran scholarship, Leipzig and Halle**. There, the Domgymnasium (or earlier, Stiftsschule), was founded in 1575, and had several professors in these years. Thus, the Budapest manuscript is probably a witness to the teaching of methodology in Merseburg in the 1610s.

Further reading:

Gilbert, Neal W. *Renaissance Concepts of Method*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1960.

Backus, Irena. "The Teaching of Logic in Two Protestant Academies at the End of the 16th Century. The Reception of Zabarella in Strasbourg and Geneva," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 80 (1989): 240–251.

Maclean, Ian. "Meditations of Zabarella in Northern Germany, 1586–1623." In: Gregorio Piaia (ed.). *La presenza dell'aristotelismo padovano nella filosofia della prima modernità*. Roma-Padova: Editrice Antenore, 2002. 173–198.

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Farkas Gábor Kiss
(Senior Scholar)



SCHOLAR

—
*A specialist in a particular
 branch of study,
 especially the humanities.*

—
 Oxford Languages
 November 8, 2022

—
*A person who studies a subject
 in great detail, especially at
 a university.*

—
*Someone who is intelligent or
 good at learning by studying.*

—
 Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary &
 Thesaurus © Cambridge University Press
 November 8, 2022

—
*A person with great knowledge,
 usually of a particular subject.*

—
 Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary
 © Cambridge University Press
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What is it that matters to you as a scholar?

Alicja Bielak (Postdoctoral Researcher)

It is very important for me to be able **to examine the materials in various archives** and **meet the researchers who interact with them**. Becoming acquainted with research and materials in other languages and written within diverse cultural backgrounds broadens not only the field of research but also the sensibility, making it possible to ask new questions of the studied texts.

Gniewomir Hawrasz (PhD student)

If I were to answer this question in one word, I would say – **passion**. The passion for the subject, your particular research topic, this type of inner urge directing you towards your goals, be it: satisfying intellectual needs, unveiling some 'hidden truths' or engaging in great debates. To me, scholarly pursuit rests on this peculiar (maybe undefinable?) **sense of direction hinging on passion**, this one thing that makes your heart beat faster, the sentiment serving as a compass, your purpose.

Danilo Facca (Senior Scholar)

Never before had philosophers had so many books from the philosophers before them (Greek, Latin, Arabic, Jewish, medieval ...). **What to do with all this wisdom?** At a certain point, however, their gaze was no longer turned back and perhaps they even read fewer books. Why and what had happened in the meantime? How this affected the intellectual history of modern and contemporar age? And what happened to the king of philosophers, Aristotle?

Luisa Brotto (Fellow)

As a scholar working on the history of ideas, I am interested in **exploring how knowledge of past notions can impact the way we face philosophical issues in the present**. In particular, I aim to uncover neglected approaches to social inclusion (focusing on the role of trust) by examining Renaissance and Early modern sources. Whereas the central part of my work is retracing past social and political conceptions, I also wish to inquire whether they can somehow contribute to ongoing debates. I believe that academic research benefits from the creation of collaborative, non- competitive environments: sharing results and getting constructive feedback from colleagues improve the quality of life and scholarly work.

examination of materials

discussions

KNOWLEDGE

archives

transfer

exploring

present

past

sense of direction

UNDERSTANDING

how science relates to human life

impact

passion

exchange of ideas

RESEARCHER

balance between the interests
of me and community

meetings

work

free food

curiosity

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Matthias Rock (Fellow)

What matters most to me as a scholar is **understanding**. For me **understanding a text**, especially a text from the past, is **like understanding another person**. It's something you do on your own, closed in your office, but also with colleagues and friends, in conversation. I enjoy that last part very much, **to discuss and to work with others**. It shows me that not everything is solvable with algorithms or quantitative research. We also need the hermeneutical approach.

Farkas Gábor Kiss (Senior Scholar)

Dealing with early modernity, and especially with early modern knowledge exchange, I am always struck by the relativity and temporality of scientific paradigms and values on the surface, but on the other hand, I am constantly amazed by the unchanged patterns in ways of thinking, educational models, and human power structures which remind me of our current lives. The greatest experience for me in doing research on this source material is **realizing the enormous distance of the past, and at the same time discovering the continuity of our identity in it**. As a scholar, what matters to me the most is bringing to the fore this ambivalence of distance and identity, which can **help our readers better understand how science and scholarship relates to human life**.

Ove Averin (PhD student)

Free food at conferences. Yes, that is right. The hope for some **free food** is the only thing that gets me out of bed in the morning.

Valentina Lepri (Principal Investigator)

Doing research is certainly challenging and requires rigor, but for me more important than anything is always **to follow one's curiosity**, to approach what stimulates but one does not understand, what fills one's head with questions. Somehow **you become a child again discovering the world with wonder and enthusiasm**.

Gábor Förköli (Postdoctoral Researcher)

What matters to me as a scholar is **to find the delicate balance between my personal interest and the interests of a community**. Or otherwise: between my freedom to choose a research topic and the actual needs of a team and a public. Both sides are necessary to do something that matters in research.



Valentina Lepri

Principal Investigator
in ERC CoG n. 864542,
KnowStudents project.

Head of the HRK Centre.

Associate Professor at IFiS PAN.

A person without whom
our Centre would not have come
into existence.

While her research profile
and interests are presented
on our website,
here you can get to know her
from a different perspective.

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Meet our team – Valentina Lepri

Can you please tell us about your scientific interests and main inspirations?

Systems of knowledge manipulation and creation in the early modern age are my main research interest. This is a multifaceted field of study that focuses as much on printed and manuscript documents. One main inspiration is not there, or rather, there are many. What has always moved me is curiosity about the ways people learn and convey what they know through the medium of the written text.

How did you become interested in your field? Can you remember some ground-breaking moments or milestones that made you realize you would like to dedicate yourself towards inquiry in your field?

I believe it happened at seminars organized by the National Institute for Renaissance Studies in Florence and lectured by the renowned scholars Conor Fahy and Neil Harris. They were seminars focused on the history of Renaissance printing, and I was still an undergraduate student of philosophy. I was thunderstruck to discover the collective effort behind printed works in transmitting (and sometimes distorting!) new knowledge.

How did your interests evolve over the years?

It has evolved by moving thematically from the political to the academic knowledge, in terms of resources I have added to the study of Renaissance prints that of manuscripts.

What is your 'biggest' discovery? What was the most fascinating idea you have encountered? Maybe some artefact?

The greatest idea is undoubtedly the one yet to come. However, I remember fondly the manuscripts of Hieronymus Besler, a student and later secretary of the philosopher Giordano Bruno, preserved in Erlangen, which have long made me reflect on the importance of university notes in intellectual history and in my own research work.

Describe early modern knowledge / philosophy in three WORDS.

Fascinating, surprising, inspiring.

Is there a place for friendship in academia? Or maybe it is a cruel and inhospitable environment?

Most of my friendships are in academia.



What is the most fundamental question?

How did a man of the XVI century reason?



What are the biggest advantages of being a scholar?

Simply doing research because it is a continuous expression of freedom, nothing better comes to mind.



What is the place of philosophers and philosophy in the modern world?

In the university to inflame young people.

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Meet our team – Valentina Lepri

What is academia to you? How could you define or describe the values that should characterize a purely scientific pursuit?

Academia is my world, and like all working environments there are positive and negative aspects. I do not think I am able or even in a position to define the values that should characterize a purely scientific pursuit. However, I believe that purely scientific activity does not exist because we are human beings who communicate and this always influences but fortunately also helps our research.

How does your research fit into your daily life? Which of the skills developed in your professional life were you able to transfer or utilize in private settings?

I would say the critical sense towards all things, especially towards the books I read and even towards the films and TV series I see. In practice, I always look for the reasons behind a certain content, a bit tiring for those around me.

What is your best memory from the study mission, field trip, or conference?

The final party at the Renaissance Society of America conference in San Diego (2013). Scholars from all corners of the planet talking about their studies around a bonfire.

Cats or dogs?

Forever cats!



Ciubecca & Frodo.
Faithful furry counselors of Valentina Lepri.

Our calendar

Research trips & study missions

September 11–15, 2022 • Venice (Italy) • *Danilo Facca, Valentina Lepri* • The Museo Correr Library, Biblioteca Marciana

September 18–23, 2022 • Cracow (Poland) • *Alicja Bielak* • Jagiellonian Library

September 25 – October 1, 2022 • Wrocław (Poland) • *Hanna Mazheika* • Ossolineum

September 30, 2022 • Győr (Hungary) • *Gábor Fököli* • Diocesan Library

October 9–13, 2022 • Vilnius (Lithuania) • *Alicja Bielak, Danilo Facca, Valentina Lepri* • Vilnius University Library

October 9–16, 2022 • Wolfenbüttel (Germany) • *Matthias Roick* • The Herzog August Library

October 24 – November 5, 2022 • Wolfenbüttel (Germany) • *Ove Averin* • The Herzog August Library

Conferences & workshops

September 12–16, 2022 • Venice (Italy) • *Luisa Brotto, Danilo Facca, Matthias Roick* • International Society for Intellectual History Conference

September 7–10, 2022 • Esztergom (Hungary) • *Gábor Fököli* • Janus Pannonius, Joannes Vitesius, and the Aftermath of the Humanist Tradition (1450–1630)

October 4, 2022 • Budapest (Hungary) • *Gábor Fököli* • The First Scholar of the Holy Crown: Conference on the 400th Anniversary of Péter Révay's Death

November 10–11, 2022 • Madrid (Spain) • *Matthias Roick* • IX International conference on the study of the idea of nobility in the modern age

September

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October

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31						

November

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28	29	30				

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Issue 1

Autumn 2022

September

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October

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31						



November

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28	29	30				

Our calendar

Other events

September 5–10, 2022 • Smardzewice (Poland) • *Valentina Lepri*, *Katarzyna Rusinek-Abarca* • GSSR Summer School

September 24, 2022 • Warsaw (Poland) • Science Festival

October 6–8, 2022 • Warsaw (Poland) • GSSR's 30th Anniversary

Future plans

November 17, 2022 • Online • **Surprise!** Note it in your calendar and await our action 😊

November 17–19, 2022 • Berlin (Germany) • *Matthias Roick* • lecture within the framework of the 'Forschungskolloquium Latinistik' at Free University of Berlin

November 24–25, 2022 • Debrecen (Hungary) • *Gábor Fököli* • Library of the Reformed Church of Debrecen

November 30 – December 7, 2022 • Vienna (Austria) • *Gniewomir Hawrasz*, *Valentina Lepri* • Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books of the Austrian National Library (called The Augustinian Reading Room)

December 18–20, 2022 • Cracow (Poland) • *Whole Team* • Yearly workshop of *KnowStudents* team

What's more & what's next?

Variety and growth – for sure!

Trips, meetings, discussions, publications, and plenty of ideas. The most crucial (or just those meaningful to us?) will be brought to you in the next issue (February 2023).

We hope you find this newsletter interesting and worth spending time with over a cup of tea or coffee.

Meanwhile – enjoy your Autumn as we enjoy ours!

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