THE PRINTING REVOLUTION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE RENAISSANCE, REFORMATION, COUNTER-REFORMATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Since 2010, the Historiana website has been developing transnational, multiperspective source materials for students and teachers across Europe. Much of the material produced so far has focused on the 20th century; but our aim is to provide as wide a range of materials as possible going deeper into the past. We wish to address key themes such as the Renaissances, the Reformation and Counter Reformation, and the Enlightenment. To link these themes together and to plot a path through their vast scope, we decided to build a new Source Collection focused on the Printing Revolution, and how this influenced cultural, religious and intellectual change. This will appear on the Historiana website as a stand-alone Source Collection, but sources from that collection will also be incorporated into future units or modules on the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment.

The Printing Revolution
The age of printing using movable type began around 1450, when Gutenberg first began work on printing the Bible, the first copy of which appeared in 1455. At first, printers mostly produced much larger quantities of the writings previously circulated in manuscripts, often with accumulated errors. Later, humanism transformed the quality of books, through the determination to return to original Greek, Hebrew and Latin texts. Printers began to work with specialist writers, editors and proof readers. A new breed of educated printer-publishers emerged, integrating the new techniques that enabled vast increases in the range, speed and circulation of knowledge. Printing also led to the emergence of new readerships. Popular illustrated books fostered a huge expansion of literacy, affordability and demand. This printing revolution was chaotic and uncontrolled, undermining the dominance of intellectual elites and aiding the 'democratisation' of knowledge.

Printing and the Renaissance
The printing revolution did not trigger the Renaissance. Mass printing developed in the mid-15th century; the time of the "high Renaissance". Many cultural and artistic trends of the Italian Renaissance had already spread to central and northern Europe (Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent, Paris, Nuremburg, Dresden, Cracow etc) **before** mass printing, usually through authors, artists, academics, students and itinerant priests. However, while printing did not cause the Renaissance the two quickly became mutually dependent.   Printing accelerated the circulation of ideas and enabled faster, more diverse interactions and innovations.

Printing, the Reformation and the Counter Reformation
The rise and spread of Protestantism was built on printing: on translation of religious texts into vernacular languages and on the unstoppable flood of pamphlets and woodcuts that communicated reformist ideas and were critical of the teachings and rituals of the established church. But printing was also as important to the Catholic Church as it was to Protestantism. Printing standardised the rituals and teachings of the Catholic Church. Diversity in the forms of preaching was overtaken by uniformity of worship. Later, this unified form of worship helped to reinforce the Counter-Reformation.

Printing and the Enlightenment
Printing ensured that the books of the philosophes reached a wide audience and not just in France. Bu also since all their works were put on the Catholic Index, banning them was probably the best publicity they could have for boosting sales. Enlightenment thinkers like Diderot, Rousseau, Helvetius and Voltaire, after experiencing censorship in France, got their books published by printers in towns and cities such as Geneva, Basle and Neuchâtel in Switzerland, and Amsterdam and Rotterdam in the United Provinces. Often printers who had produced humanist and protestant books and pamphlets and now printed the works of the philosophes, were living in cities where they were free from prosecution or persecution by the Inquisition. The printed word was the battleground on which the Enlightenment fought against traditional elites.

So, at EUROCLIO we decided that we would look for sources to tell us, not just about key events and personalities of cultural change in the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment, but also sources reflecting the impact of cultural change on people at different levels of society all over Europe; as seen through the 'printing revolution'.

You can help us. We invite the historical community to contribute sources for inclusion in our Source Collection, that will help us to answer such questions as: Who were the printers? When did they set up print works in your area? What was their contribution to the Renaissance, reformation, counter-reformation or enlightenment? What did they print and publish? Who wrote these works? Who were the readers who bought and read them? What impact did these works have on the way people thought or felt?

Methodology: crowdsourcing and participation
So how will we set about this task? In 2018 EUROCLIO organised two Webinars on the Russian Revolutions. Our aim was to set the events into a wider international context and explore the different ways in which people, on different levels of society, perceived and responded to what was happening. We asked the participants to send us sources from their own countries that would reflect a multiplicity of perspectives. The results have been very successful. We are now in the process of editing Source Collections that will be uploaded to Historiana later this year. We hope that history teachers and students will "dip into" these resources to supplement the textbooks they usually use.

These webinars were a pilot project for what we describe as a crowd-sourcing approach. The results have convinced us that it will be worth continuing with this strategy to engage our membership and others in the process of developing Historiana. Already we have run a Webinar on the Fall of the Berlin Wall. This Webinar on the Printing Revolution will be our second Webinar this year. A third is planned for November and we will provide more details about this on our website nearer the time.

Sources and perspectives
We hope contributors will be willing to provide us with sources on Printing, and its links to the Renaissance, the Reformation and Counter Reformation, and the Enlightenment. These sources can be visual, or text-based.

Note that we do not expect organised collections of material; it may be only a few items. Sources not in English will be welcome; with translation if possible, but it will be sufficient simply to have a brief summary explanation in English. It is also important to be aware of copyright issues – we can only use sources that are copyright-free. All contributors will be acknowledged on Historiana.

If you are interested in the contribution of printing to these major themes of European history, and would like to participate in this upcoming Webinar, please look out for details about it on our website and on social media and register online.

We look forward to meeting you online!

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