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□ Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

Scholars from Russia have since the beginnings of our SIG's activities in 2009 been among the key players in creating a transnational forum for the study of the history of reading primers. One more proof of this is the panel 'Adults as Target Group of Primers', organised in collaboration with Russian universities in December 2021 and mentioned on page 26 of this newsletter. Members in other countries have therefore more than one reason to look back to the involvement of colleagues from Russia with gratitude – an experience connected with the establishment of personal relationships and thought to be embedded in the overcoming of the earlier East-West divide. It is with great regret that since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 it has become impossible to continue this cooperation with representatives of Russian state institutions. One can only hope for a future in which the conditions for cross-border cooperation with Russia will be re-established.

May 2023

Wendelin Sroka

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□ Essay

Three rediscovered ABC books, printed in Würzburg in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*Wendelin Sroka*

Würzburg, a city in South Germany, situated on the river Main and nowadays the administrative centre of the Bavarian governmental district of Lower Franconia, can look back on a remarkable history of education and printing: A *Schreibschule* [writing school] started its work in the eighth century, soon after the bishopric was established in 742, a first university was founded in 1402, and printing shops began to operate in the city in the late fifteenth century (Pleticha-Geuder & Pabel 2004). Nevertheless, books for the teaching of reading skills reflecting the Catholic tradition as reinforced in the 1570s by the Counter-Reformation and produced in the prince-bishopric [*Hochstift*] of Würzburg before the period of reforms of schooling in the 1770s informed by Catholic Enlightenment have hitherto been unknown in historical schoolbook research. A print from 1633, listed in Gisela Teistler's inventory of German-language primers – *Deutsch Lesebüchlein Für die Schulen im Hertzogthumb Francken* (Teistler 2003, No. 62) – is an edition with catechetical texts according to Lutheran doctrine, published during the Thirty Year's War when the territory was ruled by a Protestant prince for a short period of time.¹ And the oldest Catholic reading primer known until recently, issued in 1771 by Johann Jacob Stahel, a Würzburg-based printer and publisher, was destined for schools in the neighbouring diocese of Fulda: *Neu eingerichtetes A B C Buchstabier- und Lesebüchlein*.

Three ABC books now shed some more light on Würzburg's early history of primers. Two of them, one in German and one in Latin, have recently been retrieved by the *Dombibliothek Hildesheim*:

A A a b c d e f ... Die lautende Buchstaben ... Würtzburg, gedruckt bey Jacob Herten n. d. (before 1700), [16] p. (see Figure 1)

ABCDEFGH ... Vocales ...VVIRCEBVRGI, Ex officina Typographica Jobi Hertzii n. d. (before 1700), [16] p. (see Figure 3)



Figure 1: *A A a b c d e f ... Würtzburg n. d. (before 1700), fol.A1r*



Figure 2: *A A a b c d e f ... Wirzburg 1772, fol.A1r*

¹ For full bibliographic data of primary sources mentioned in this article and for picture credits see the list of references below.

□ Würzburg ABC books

From June 2022 to February 2023, the *Dombibliothek*, in existence since the diocese of Hildesheim was established in 815, had on stage the exhibition *bild-ung.macht.bischof. Die Bibliothek des Klosters St. Godehard* [education. power.bishop. The library of the St. Godehard monastery]. The digital part of the exhibition is available online: <https://www.godehardbibliothek.de/bild-ungmachtbischof>, and its section on educational literature presents, among others, three schoolbooks from the early modern period bound together in one volume. It includes the mentioned prints (first the Latin, then the German version), followed by a French-German (bilingual) textbook, issued in 1675 in Hannover.² According to a handwritten dedication in French on the front endpapers, the volume was in 1816 given as a present to 'Charles Bögershausen', an eleven-years-old boy. Carl Bögershausen later studied Catholic theology, was ordained priest and in the 1850s served as parish priest in Hildesheim.

During the preparation of this essay a third print, again not listed in Teistler's inventory of German-language primers, was identified as a Würzburg ABC book. Part of the holdings of Würzburg University Library it has until recently been categorized in the catalogues by the keyword *Gebetbuch* [prayer book]: *A A a b c d e f ... Die lau ten de Buch sta ben ... Wirzburg, gedruckt bey Franz Sebastian Sartorius 1772, [16] p.* (see Figure 2)

This essay highlights and discusses characteristics of the three Würzburg ABC books. Four sections engage with these editions with a focus on a) general features, allowing their classification as specific types of textbooks, b) the religious texts offered as first reading exercises, c) the pictures on the last printed page of the two vernacular prints and d) issues of their historical context. The concluding section e) offers some more general notes on the study of primers in early modern Germany.³

a) Basic features and classification

The communalities of the three Würzburg booklets are remarkable, be their language German or Latin: They are all prints of 16 pages in octavo, with page numbering in *folio* (A1r – A8v), printed on cardboard, lacking a title page and book title. Layout is characterised by a decorative frame from the first to the last page and by the progressive reduction of the size of typeface in the parts with reading exercises. A1r offers the alphabet in small and capital letters, vowels and consonants, whereas A1v shows syllables in five columns, from "Ab eb ib ob ub" in the first to "za ze zi zo zu" in the last line. Catechetical and other religious texts, starting with the Lord's Prayer, are presented from A2r onwards. These features, and in particular the content of the first page, allow us to classify the three booklets as ABC books.

A number of differences are also worthy of note, most of them revealing the Latin edition, printed by Jobus (German: Johann Jobst) Hertz as distinct from its vernacular counterparts: These include, next to the use of Roman type in Latin and Gothic type in the German-language editions, three features of the latter which the Latin version is lacking: An initial cap of the letter A on the first page (compare Figures 1, 2 and 3), a header line with the letters of the alphabet on the double page spread from the second to the penultimate page (see Figure 6) and a woodcut on the last page (see Figures 8 and 9).

The German-language ABC books can also be considered reading primers, i. e. books designed and destined for the teaching of reading at beginner's level, to be given into the hands of boys and girls. In contrast, the Latin version was

² This textbook, entitled *Alphabet: Divisé par Syllabes ... Alphabet : Getheilet durch Syllben ...* [Alphabet: divided by syllables ...] and according to the subtitle destined for use by young princesses, also deserves a closer investigation.

³ Sincere thanks go to Eva Pleticha-Geuder (formerly Würzburg University Library), Katharina Boll-Becht (Würzburg University Library) and Nikola Willner (Diözesanarchiv Würzburg) who have helped me to learn more about the history of printing, schoolbooks and catechisms in early modern Würzburg. I also wish to thank the Dombibliothek Hildesheim and the Würzburg University Library for their consent to use pictures of items from their holdings.

Würzburg ABC books

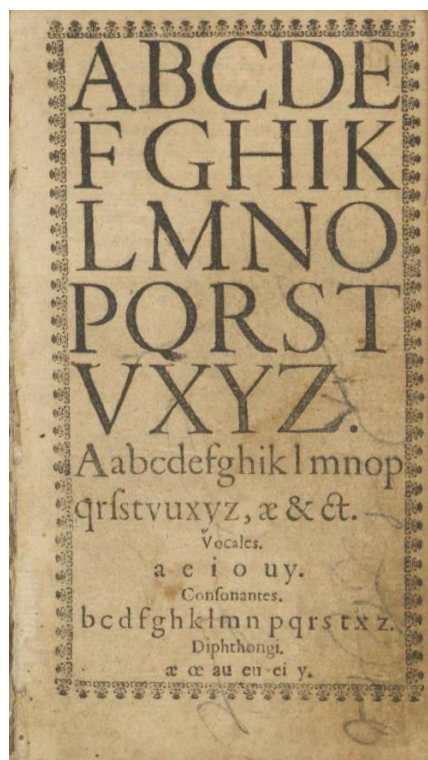


Figure 3: ABCDEFGH ... VVIRZEBVRGI n. d. (before 1700), fol.A1r

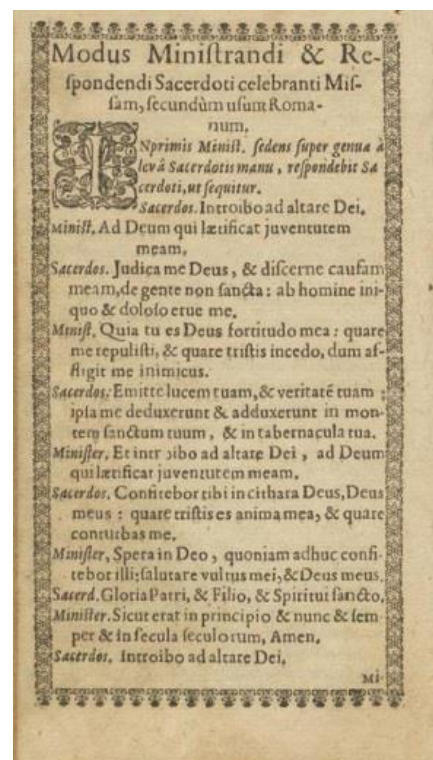


Figure 4: ABCDEFGH ... VVIRZEBVRGI n. d. (before 1700), fol.A6v

produced for use by boys who started to learn this language and already had acquired basic reading skills in German. Hints to the latter are the lack of the header line with the letters of the alphabet on the double page spread and the smaller font size of the reading exercises, especially in the last part of the booklet. Additional differences refer to design: In the Latin version the otherwise popular A-initial on the first page and the picture on the last page are missing, while most continuous texts, from the Lord's Prayer onwards, start with a decorated initial, thus taking up a tradition of medieval manuscript illumination. On the other hand, only the booklet issued by Sartorius in 1772 has the letters 'J. M. J.' – for 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph' – printed in Antiqua script above the alphabet on the first page, and polysyllabic words are set in separated syllables throughout the booklet (see Figures 2 & 9).

Regardless of the differences, prints with general characteristics as mentioned above, i.e. a booklet in octavo with 16 printed pages without a title page, beginning with alphabets and syllables, followed by catechetical and other religious texts for use as reading exercises, have been common in previous times in parts of Central, Northern, Western and Eastern Europe in the respective vernaculars, and occasionally also in Latin. With an overall history from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century they represent a basic model of the catechism primer – a type of textbook combining the teaching of reading and religious catechesis (Juska-Bacher et al. 2023).

Frequently, though not always, such booklets have the picture of a rooster on a prominent place, usually on the last page, and in some languages the pictorial motif has also lent its name to these prints, e. g. the *hanebog* in Danish and Norwegian, the *haneboek* in Dutch, the *kuke-aabits* in Estonian and the *Hahnenfibel* in German (Sroka 2023b). A picture with this motif is also found on the last page of the ABC book printed by Jacob Hertz, which can therefore also be classified as a rooster primer. In contrast, the version issued by Franz S. Sartorius offers a picture of 'Mary, Queen of Heaven'.

Table 1 demonstrates communalities and differences with reference to the basic content of the three booklets. As this juxtaposition reveals, the reading passages consist of catechetical texts and prayers, in the Latin version supplemented by the *Modus Ministrandi*, a guide for altar boys to serve the mass (see again Figure 4).

□ Würzburg ABC books

Table 1: Structure and content of three ABC books, printed in Würzburg in the seven-teenth and eighteenth centuries

	<i>ABC (German) Jacob Hertz before 1700</i>	<i>ABC (Latin) J. Jobst Hertz before 1700</i>	<i>ABC (German) Franz S. Sar- torius 1772</i>
alphabets, vowels, consonants	A1r	A1r	A1r
syllables	A1v	A1v	A1v
catechetical texts	A2r-A5r	A2r-A4r	A2r-A6r
prayers	A5v-A8r	A4r-A6r	A6r-A8r
<i>Modus Ministrandi</i> for altar boys	---	A6v-A8v	---
picture (woodcut)	A8v	---	A8v

b) Religious texts

Cuius regio, eius religio: For centuries, the principle confirmed by the 1555 Peace of Augsburg for the territories of the Holy Roman Empire that the ruler was entitled to dictate his or her subject's denominational affiliation usually determined the content not only of the catechisms printed for use in the given region, but also the content of the reading exercises in the respective primers. In early modern Europe, the reading exercises of ABC books issued in Lutheran territories inside and outside the Empire quite often include the five 'Chief Parts' [*Hauptstücke*] of Christian Faith according to Luther's *Small Catechism*, plus a series of prayers.

In ABC books with Lutheran catechetical texts, the presentation of the Chief Parts usually differs in three respects from that of the *Small Catechism*: The first is the order of the parts: Whereas the catechism starts with the Ten Commandments, followed by the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the words of institution of Baptism and Eucharist, the first catechetical text in a primer is normally the Lord's Prayer, thought to be already known or easy to memorize by young children; this is followed by the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the two sacraments. Secondly, the primer dispenses with the 'catechetical' question-and-answer-format, in favour of presenting the content in continuous text.³ Thirdly, in early modern catechism primers at least the first parts, if not all reading exercises, including the subheadings, are set with syllable divisions, marked either by a space or by a hyphen between syllables – a design applied in primers to facilitate syllabication (see Figures 2, 5 and 6).

Taking into consideration the place of publication it comes with no surprise that the reading passages of the Würzburg ABC books offer religious content in accordance with Catholic doctrine. In doing so they add to the small number of extant ABC books of Catholic affiliation in early modern Germany.

A closer examination of the catechetical texts provided by the Würzburg ABC book reveals that they are excerpts from the so-called *Smallest Catechism*, a booklet for children compiled by the Jesuit Peter Canisius (1521-1597), a leading figure of the Counter-Reformation in German lands and author of two more extensive catechisms, the *Summary of Christian Doctrine* and the *Small Catechism*. The *Smallest* was originally published in Latin in 1556 and soon translated into German and other languages (Streicher 1935, 19*-25*; Begheyn 2005, 46-49). The German-language version saw numerous prints already in the sixteenth century, among them a Würzburg edition in 1581. As for the bishopric of Würzburg, the catechisms written by Canisius were repeatedly declared mandatory textbooks for church and school use by ecclesiastical authorities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Schraut & Pieri 2004, 76; Weiss 2005, 231-233; for Canisius-based catechisms and catechetical traditions in Würzburg see also Begheyn 2005, 89-90; Willner 2020, 111-113).

⁴ For an exception to the rule regarding the retention of the order of the Chief Parts and the partial takeover of questions and answers from Luther's *Small Catechism* in Estonian catechism primers see Pöldvee 2023, 199.

□ Würzburg ABC books

The *Smallest Catechism* has a five-part structure, though the sequence of the parts and the number of questions differ, depending on the edition (Begheyne 2005, 90). *Catechismus In Kurtze Frag und Antwort gestellt, für die gemeine Layen und junge Kinder sehr dienstlich* [Catechism, arranged in short questions and answers, for ordinary lay people and young children], issued in 1581 in Würzburg, consists of 46 unnumbered units. It starts with five introductory questions, with two of them (units 3 & 4) addressing the trinitarian formula – *In the name of the father* – and the sign of the cross for each person of the Holy Trinity. What follows are units arranged according to five Chief Parts of Christian Catholic Faith, i. e. chapters organised in the order of Faith, Sacraments, Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer plus Hail Mary and 'Christian Justice', i. e. morals. Each chapter starts with a corresponding headline, e. g. *Von dem Christlichen Glauben* [About the Christian Faith], followed by the question *Welches ist das Erste Hauptstück Christlicher Catholischer Lehr?* [Which is the First Chief Part of Christian Catholic Doctrine?].

Regarding the presentation of Chief Parts, two of the differences noted between Luther's *Small Catechism* and corresponding ABC books can also be confirmed for the Würzburg prints: the change of the sequence of the Chief Parts, introduced once again by the Lord's Prayer, and the replacement of the question-and-answer format by continuous text. Figures 5 and 6 allow to compare the pages with the Lord's Prayer in two German-language early modern ABC books, with a Lutheran version to the left and a Catholic version to the right. The comparison shows a remarkable similarity of the wording of the seven petitions, plus the lack of the doxology – *Denn Dein ist das Reich ...* [For thine is the kingdom ...] – in the Catholic version. This difference is usually an early indicator of the denominational affiliation of catechism primers.

In the Lutheran as well as in the Catholic case, the anonymous compilers of 16-page ABC books were forced to reduce the scope of catechetical content as presented in the 'small' catechism. This turned out to be a particular challenge for those who had to select from the *Smallest Catechism* written by Canisius. Compared with Luther's source text, the *Smallest Catechism* is much more complex, mainly due to additions to the biblical texts, e. g. the commandments of the church as complements to the Ten Commandments, and to the sophis-

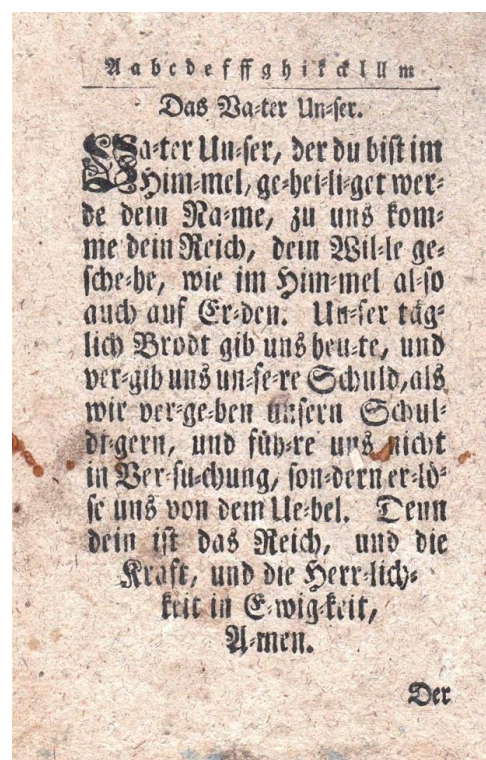


Figure 5: A A a b c d e f ... Salzwedel n. d. (ca. 1720), fol. A3v

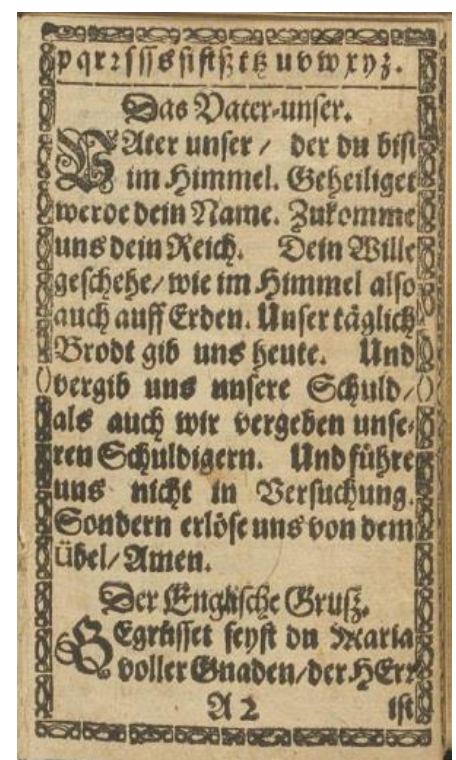


Figure 6: A A a b c d e f ... Würzburg n. d. (before 1700), fol. A2r

□ Würzburg ABC books

ticated doctrine of morals as offered in the part on 'Christian justice'. How then could a *Catechismus minimus*, as the Latin version of the *Smallest Catechism* was called, be further reduced to a *Catechismus super-minimus* for pupils who just had started school? In the given case the reduction of complexity has been reached by omission and by simplification.

Table 2 demonstrates how the catechetical content of the Würzburg ABC books can be traced back to content – in the given case to question-and-answer units – of the *Smallest Catechism* by Peter Canisius, relying on the Würzburg 1581 print. Column 1 offers the fictive number, and Column 2 the subject matter of the respective question-and-answer unit of the Würzburg edition of the *Smallest Catechism* as considered in one or more of the three textbooks for young readers. Columns 3, 4 and 5 indicate the presence or absence of the respective content in the Würzburg ABC books.

Table 2: Content of the *Smallest Catechism* by Canisius, Würzburg 1581, offered as reading exercises in three Würzburg ABC books

	<i>Canisius: Catechismus ... Wirtzburg 1582: fictive number and content of question-and-answer unit as contained in one or more of the three Würzburg ABC books</i>	ABC (German) Jacob Hertz before 1700	ABC (Latin) J. Jobst Hertz before 1700	ABC (German) Franz S. Sartorius 1772
[03]	Trinitarian formula	---	A2r	A2r
[08]	Twelve Articles of Christian Faith	A2v-A3v	A2v-A3r	A2v-A3r
[13]	Seven Holy Sacraments	A4v	---	A4r
[22]	God's Ten Commandments	A3v-A4r	A3v-A4r	A3v
[24]	Commandments of the Holy Christian Church	A4r-A4v	---	A3v-A4r
[27]	The Lord's Prayer, with the Angelical Salutation attached	A2r-A2v	A2r-A2v	A2r-A2v
[34]	The seven deadly or grave sins	A4v	---	A4r-A4v
[35]	The six sins against the Holy Spirit	---	---	A4v
[36]	The four sins which 'cry unto heaven'	---	---	A4v
[37]	The nine alien sins	---	---	A5r
[40]	The three principle good works	---	---	A5r
[42]	The seven corporal works of mercy	A5r	---	A5r
[43]	The seven spiritual works of mercy	A5r	---	A5v
[44]	The eight beatitudes	---	---	A5v-A6r
[45]	The three evangelical counsels	---	---	A6r
[46]	The four last things of human beings	A5r	---	A6r

As Table 2 indicates, the consideration of catechetical texts provided in the three Würzburg ABC books delivers a varied picture. First, the number of units of the *Smaller Catechism* considered in the respective textbooks range from nine in the Jacob Hertz print through five in the Hiob Hertz (Latin) to sixteen in the Sartorius version. Second, the ABC books offer the Lord's Prayer and the Angelical Salutation as consecutive yet stand-alone texts, each with a headline on its own (see Figure 5), whereas the two prayers are bound together in one question-and-answer unit in the *Smallest Catechism*. Third, the three ABC books all include, next to the Lord's Prayer and the Angelical Salutation, three more catechetical texts, namely – in short – the Creed, the Sacraments, and the Ten Commandments. Units of the *Smallest Catechism* that entirely fell victim to reductions in the ABC books include, e. g., the definition

▣ Würzburg ABC books

of a Catholic Christ (U 2), namely 'he who, after being baptised believes and professes what the old Catholic Roman church believes and professes, be it written in the bible or not [... *es sei eben in der bibel geschriben oder nit*]' (Canisius 1581, A3r). Simplification, on the other hand, has been reached by an increase of the share of mere enumerations. This applies, among others, to the presentation of the Seven Sacraments: While in the catechism a separate unit is devoted to each of them (U 14-20), an enumerated list must do in the ABC books.

As shown in Table 1, what follows in the ABC books behind the catechetical texts are prayers. Created for specific occasions and concerns, their selection varies even more between the three booklets, with their communality confined to table blessings (prayers before and after meal), complemented by morning and evening prayers in the German-language versions. The range of prayers and the role of the *Modus Ministrandi* included in the Latin booklet will be further discussed in the section about the historical context.

c) The pictures on the last page of the two vernacular prints

Woodcuts embellish the last page of the German-language editions, and they also require closer consideration: the picture of a rooster in the late seventeenth-century manual (see Figure 8), and that of 'Mary Queen of Heaven', presented as part of a picture-text unit, in the 1772 booklet (see Figure 9).

The picture of a rooster is mostly found in Lutheran ABC books from the late sixteenth to the late nineteenth century, issued in languages such as Danish, Estonian (North and South Estonian), Finnish, German (High and Low German), Latin, Latvian, Norwegian, Polish and Swedish (for bibliographic data of such prints see Juska-Bacher et al. 2023, 353-356). Rooster primers were quite popular in parts of early modern Germany, and proof of this are some phrases, mentioning the image of the rooster on the last page of the ABC book in the context of educational achievement: Children which 'did not even make it to the rooster' were considered illiterate, in contrast to all those 'who made it to the rooster' (Schmack 1960, 50). The latter also 'were entitled to request a present from their parents or godparent' (Kehr 1879, 353), and such presents, e. g. pretzels, coins, or a sugar loaf, are occasionally depicted in ABC books next to the rooster.



Figure 7: A A a b c d e f ... Hamborch 1583, fol. A8v



Figure 8: A A a b c d e f ... Würtzburg n. d. (before 1700), fol. A8v

▣ Würzburg ABC books

Details of the depiction of the rooster in ABC books vary to a considerable extent, but next to some special variants two basic forms can be established: the rooster standing on a hexagonal pedestal and the teaching rooster. Again, as regards the first basic form, it consists of several types, among them that represented in the Würzburg ABC book printed by Jacob Hertz: a rooster with a leave comb and large tail feathers, his eyes directed into the distance, three ribbons around the upper part of his body, these tied together by vertical ribbons, the animal standing upright on a hexagonal, massive, chamfered, and decorated pedestal.

In her study about the history of Swedish primers and their relation to Germany Ingeborg Willke has noted that this particular pictorial motif can be traced back to a Low German ABC book, printed in 1583 in Hamburg by Hans Binder (Willke 1965, 99; see Figure 7). Willke has also outlined the career path that this specific representation of the rooster had in Danish, Estonian, Latin, Swedish and Swedish-Finnish schoolbooks for a period of all in all more than 200 years (ibid.). The rooster as depicted in the Würzburg ABC book can be added to this series of prints.

But why the picture of a rooster on the last page of a reading primer? Willke argues 'that the rooster adorns the last page of an ABC book as a Christian symbol' (Willke 1965, 100). The rooster plays a role in the passion narrative of the Bible, when Jesus tells Peter 'This very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times' (Matthew 26:34). But already in Christian iconography the rooster encompasses such diverse symbolic meanings as vigilance, divine wisdom, fertility, and the repentant sinner (Gerlach 1990). Moreover, a transnational analysis of depictions of the rooster in primers reveals a variety of meanings, including those of a more mundane nature, and the same applies to the content of the verses which repeatedly accompany the picture. In sum, multiple meanings can be ascribed to the rooster in a primer, from the representative of divine wisdom to the more worldly harbinger of the day.

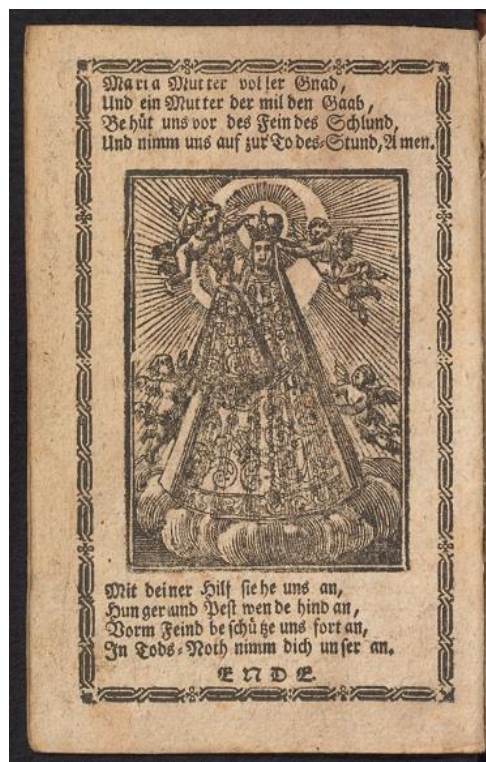


Figure 9: A A a b c d e f ... Würzburg 1772, fol. A8v

In the 1772 edition of the Würzburg ABC book the picture of the rooster is 'replaced' by a picture-text unit with the image of 'Mary Queen of Heaven'. The use of a Catholic *Andachtsbild* [devotional picture] instead of the picture of the rooster may shed a specific light on the latter, now possibly seen by contemporaries as what the Dutch scholar Johannes Stellingwerff has classified as the '*protestantse haan* [Protestant rooster]' (Stellingwerff 1979, 24) – although his image is occasionally also found elsewhere in ABC books of Catholic affiliation (Sroka 2023b, 325).

In contrast to the picture of the rooster, that of St. Mary 'Queen of Heaven' is unusual in an ABC book. The origin of this specific pictorial motif could not be identified so far, yet it fits well into the veneration of St. Mary as *Patrona Franconiae* [patroness of Franconia] (Merz 2013, 238). With reference to the picture-text-unit, a collection of religious texts published

in 1730 describes an in-memoriam card, issued in 1664 by the Sodality of Our Lady in Munich, as follows: 'Here is as a woodcut a picture of St. Mary, with baby Jesus on her right arm, and below it the following rhyme ...' (Anon. 1730, 879). What follows is, with some differences as regards spelling, the prayer

□ Würzburg ABC books

which is also printed below the picture of St. Mary in the ABC book. All in all, other than the picture of the rooster in the Würzburg schoolbook of the late seventeenth century, the picture-text unit with St. Mary on the last page, supplemented by the reminder of the Holy Family on the first page, leaves a clear Catholic mark on the 1772 edition.

d) The three ABC books in their historical context

The manuals printed by Jacob Hertz and Johann Jobst Hertz do not provide a year of publication, but several indicators support the premise that they have been published in the late seventeenth century. First, they have been bound together, apparently as unused copies, with a third textbook which according to data provided on the title page has been published in 1675. Second, Johann Jobst Hertz is known in book history as a Würzburg printer with a corresponding output for half a century, i. e. from 1657 to 1707 (Pleticha-Geuder & Pabel 2004, 39-40, 130).

Third, in contrast to Johann Jobst Hertz and some other members of the Hertz family who are well-documented as printers in Würzburg (ibid., 130), information about Jacob Hertz is very scarce. According to a journal article published in 1865, Jacob printed a church songbook entitled *Gaistliches Waldd-Vögelein* in Würzburg in 1657 (Weller 1865, 262-263). Even though no copy of this edition is extant today, the indicated year of publication hints to the seventeenth century as the time when Jacob Hertz was active as a printer. In addition, the fact that the Hertz family came from the north, namely from Protestant Erfurt (Pleticha-Geuder & Pabel 2004, 39), occasionally referred to as 'Reformation's nursery', may also provide a clue to the origin of peculiarities of the textbooks in question: Members of the Hertz family may have brought with them if not the general design of the ABC books, with their religious content adapted to Catholic doctrine and religious practices, then the pictorial motif of the rooster, and possibly even the woodblock.

Forth, both manuals are well in line with efforts made by Johann Philipp von Schönborn (1605-1673), among others prince-bishop of Würzburg from 1642, to reconstruct his territories after the end of the Thirty Years' War. A school ordinance, issued as part of an ecclesiastical order in 1670, regulates that the schoolmasters 'do not only teach children the basic skills of reading, writing and singing, but also support them so that they may learn and comprehend the catechism [*daß sie den catechismum lernen unnd begreifen mögen*]' (Kirchen-Ordnung 1670, K2r). No explicit reference is made to textbook provision in this ordinance, other than that 'the children shall not be taught from un-Catholic books' (ibid., K2v).

With reference to the two ABC books printed in the late seventeenth century, two issues may shed some more light on the context: the role of the German-language ABC book as a preparatory course for 'proper' catechesis and the purpose of the Latin version.

Just as other contemporary documents about schooling, the 1670 Würzburg school ordinance refers to reading proficiency and knowledge of the catechism as two separate domains. In fact, however, they were closely interlinked at school throughout much of Germany's early modern period at various levels, namely for beginners and for advanced readers. Proof of this is the ABC book, with catechetical texts offered, along with prayers, as reading exercises and content to be memorised, and the smallest or small catechism, used as a first reader, normally again based on the 'rote and reproduction' approach to learning. In Catholic territories this approach was from the 1770s onwards criticised, associated with outdated Jesuit pedagogy, with Würzburg a stronghold of this order of clerics from 1561 until 1773 (Doney 1988, 10).

Early modern sources published prior to the 1770s, and likewise scholarly works about the history of schooling in the prince-bishopric of Würzburg, keep silence about ABC books. This contrasts with references to catechisms and catechizing which also deal with the teaching of small children and therefore sometimes also touch the catechetical content of ABC books. For example, in

▣ Würzburg ABC books

1668 prince-bishop Johann Philipp von Schönborn issued an ordinance concerning catechesis. Published as a preface to a catechism, it requests that those who deal with catechesis 'divide young people in three groups: the first group of five- or six-year-old children shall be taught only in the most necessary basics of our Christian faith, whereas another group, made of those children who have already acquired reading proficiency, shall be offered the text of the *Canisii*, printed in large letters ...' (Volusius 1670, A4r-A4v).

Whereas at elementary school boys and girls were taught reading, writing, singing, arithmetic and not least the catechism, Latin was a 'boys only' subject at school. In Catholic territories it was part of the curriculum not only in so-called Latin schools in the cities, but also in village schools – taught by teachers with a basic command of the Latin language (Turin 1778, 130). As indicated by the comparison of the reading exercises in the ABC books, the purpose of the Latin version was less linked to catechesis. Most of the prayers offered in the German-language versions, including, e. g., morning and evening prayers, table blessings and, in the edition issued by Jacob Hertz, a prayer to one's guardian angel (A8r), were meant to be said in private (family and individual) contexts. In contrast the prayers in the Latin ABC book, including the canticles *Magnificat* (A4r-A4v) and the *Canticum Simeonis* (A4v), were primarily destined to preparing boys for liturgical services.

This purpose is particularly served by the *Modus Ministrandi*, an introduction to the words of the Latin mass for altar boys, contained in small print in the last five pages of the ABC book. From the Council of Trent to the Second Vatican Council generations of young Catholic boys were expected to memorize and practice the responses to be said in mass in Latin, and the inclusion of the *modus* in textbooks reveals that it could also be part of the school curriculum. As for Würzburg, in the early seventeenth century the schoolmaster of *Neumünster Stiftsschule* was obliged to select among his pupils those best suited as altar boys and teach them the *Modus* (Wendehorst 1989, 181). At the same time these practices were not confined to Latin classes, nor was the text confined to Latin school manuals. For example, a German-language primer, issued in Mainz in 1775 as *Neues A, B, C, Buchstabil- und Lesebuch, für Kinder* [New ABC, speller and reader, for children], also offers the *Modus Ministrandi* on its final pages.

The contextual conditions of the 1772 Würzburg ABC book are quite different from those of the earlier versions. They encompass what Gisela Teistler has described, with reference to the situation in early modern Germany, as 'the explosion of the production of primers since 1770' (Teistler 1999, 272). This 'explosion' also applies to the publication of primers and readers in the prince-bishopric of Würzburg in those years – in line with reforms of the education system.

Elsewhere in Europe the habit to rely on a traditional German-language ABC book with Catholic content as a tool for the teaching of reading occasionally survived the storms of the Enlightenment for quite some time. In the French city of Metz, for example, two editions, destined for the German minority, still appeared in the 1820s. But this was not the case in Würzburg: The German-language ABC book printed in 1772 by Franz S. Sartorius can be considered the last of its kind in the territory, replaced from then on by more advanced primers. These new textbooks were compiled in connection with educational reforms informed by Catholic Enlightenment, with the Silesian abbot Ignaz von Felbiger (1724-1788), engaged also in the editing of schoolbooks, as an influential figure throughout Catholic Germany and, especially from 1774 onwards, also in Austria.

Already in 1771 a catechism which had been compiled under Felbiger's control – *Katholischer Katechismus zum Gebrauche der Schlesischen und anderer Schulen Deutschlands nach der Fähigkeit der Jugend in drey Klassen eingetheilt* [Catholic catechism for use in Silesian and other schools in Germany, graded according to young people's capacity in three classes], in short known as *Silesian Catechism*, was printed in Bamberg and Würzburg, thought to replace the catechisms by Peter Canisius in the respective bishoprics. In the preface Felbiger describes the function of the first catechism, intended 'for the smallest children', as

□ Würzburg ABC books

follows: 'This catechism is for the memory; it is word by word learnt by heart; it is used to exercise reading, and brought into children's memory through more frequent repetition.' (Felbiger 1771, A3r).

As mentioned in the introduction, a *Neu eingerichtetes A B C Buchstabier- und Lesebüchlein* [Relaunched ABC, speller and reader] was published the same year in Würzburg for schools in the neighbouring diocese of Fulda, a slightly revised version of the textbook which Felbiger had first published under the same main title in 1763 in Sagan for use in Catholic schools in Silesia. This Sagan edition, again, was to a great extent a copy of *Berlinisches neu eingerichtetes A B C Buchstabier- und Lese-Büchlein*, compiled in the late seventeen-fifties by Johann Friedrich Hähn, a Protestant cleric and pedagogue in Berlin. In an effort to overcome the traditional approach of the alphabet-method, Hähn had introduced the so-called 'tabular-literal' method. The Berlin and the Sagan versions both focus on an elaborated reading course, including long lists of polysyllabic words, while reading exercises do hardly exceed the individual sentence level. Both versions offer a catechism as an attachment to the primer, destined among others to practice reading of continuous texts: In the case of Hähn's work it is Luther's Small Catechism, while in the Sagan edition it is the first Silesian Catechism.

In contrast to their colleagues in Fulda, those in power in the prince-bishopric of Würzburg did not completely rely on Felbiger when they thought about how to improve the teaching of reading in the territory's elementary schools. 1772 also saw the publication of *Erleichterte, kurze und doch vollständige Anweisung zum Lesen; sammt einem wirklichen regelmässigen Lesbuche zur Uebung, für die Schulkinder des Hochstifts Würzburg und Herzogtums Franken. Auf höchsten Befehl Adam Friederichs, Ihres hochwürdigsten Bischoffen und gnädigsten Landesfürsten verfertigt und eingeführet 1772* [Alleviated, short and still complete instruction for reading; including a real regular reader for practice, for schoolchildren in the prince-bishopric of Würzburg and the duchy of Franconia. Completed and introduced in 1772 on the highest order of Adam Friederich, their most reverend bishop and most gracious sovereign].

According to present knowledge no complete copy is extant of this first edition, and the same applies to a documented reissue from 1775. But detailed descriptions and valuations of this work, plus parts of the book which were also published separately, provide detailed insights (for the following see *Regelmässiges Les-Buch* 1772; Anon. 1776; Küffner 1888, 87-99; Eichelsbacher & Eichelsbacher 1967, 46-48). The person behind this book and in the given case the main author was David Götz, the first director of Würzburg's teacher's academy which had been founded in 1770. The manual consists of two parts: a reading course and a reader. The latter, in brief known as *Würzburger Lesebuch* [Würzburg reader], was reissued more often and has found more scholarly attention than the 'primer-plus-reader version', but in the discussion of the Würzburg ABC books it makes sense to consider both parts.

The reading course as provided in the first part relies to some extent, though not completely, on the tabular-literal method as applied by Hähn and Felbiger. It consists of twelve tables, from the letters of the alphabet in the first to a list of words of four syllables in the last table. The 'reader' part with all-in-all 54 lessons, introduced under the separate title *Regel-mässiges Les-Buch, oder Christliche Sitten-Lehre zur Les-Übung* [Regular reader, or Christian ethics for reading exercise], is arranged as a series of lectures by a schoolmaster who directly addresses his pupils. It starts with an 'Introduction to perfect reading', followed by a series of lessons on God and his properties, with a reasoning based on 'natural religion' rather than the doctrines of the catechism. Other lessons offer moral teachings and advice for secular matters, including hygiene, illness and paying a compliment. In that David Götz redefined the content of pupils' first reading passages in a radical way he also initiated the historical process of separating the teaching of reading from the teaching of catechetical texts in Catholic schools – all in all a complex and lengthy process which in Germany has lasted until the end of the long nineteenth century (Sroka 2023a, 69).

▣ Würzburg ABC books

Three responses to the David Götz textbook, voiced by quite different actors, also shed some light on the 1772 edition of the ABC book. The first of them is a review of the 1775 edition of the primer-plus-reader version, published in the prestigious *Allgemeine Bibliothek für das Schul- und Erziehungswesen in Deutschland* [General library for schooling and education in Germany] (Anon. 1776). The review states that 'the essential doctrines of the Christian religion do not occur in the entire booklet' (ibid., 458), with the judgment set in brackets 'wherefore it does by no means become suspicious or condemnable for us' (ibid.). Would David Götz not have made an occasional reference to the purgatory and the holy mass, so the anonymous reviewer argues, the textbook would be welcome for use 'in all schools of all religious denominations' (ibid.).

Of great importance for the enforcement of educational reforms was the new ordinance for elementary schools in the prince-bishopric, issued in 1774 and again printed by Franz Sebastian Sartorius (*Schul-Ordnung* 1774). Paragraph 10 of the ordinance, dedicated to schoolbooks, not only mandates the use of the works written by Götz, but also determines that 'to this end all other so-called (!) ABC books, and no less all other books for reading exercise shall no longer be used in all schools' (ibid., 10).

But the new primer-plus-reader was not welcome everywhere. A survey of the schools in the prince-bishopric, carried out in 1780, had a focus on the implementation of the reform policies as described in the 1774 ordinance, including the introduction of the new textbook. It revealed an ambiguous picture, with resistance to the reforms especially in rural areas. A curate in Gratz Sambach, a village near Pommersfelden, wrote: 'I have read the school ordinance from the pulpit point by point; [I have] also acquired 24 textbooks for the poor, and so on. But these books were in part returned . . . The parents did not believe that one could read or use them, because they contain no Our Father, no Creed, no Ten Commandments, so that they regard the books as nothing other than Lutheran; [they] partly burned the aforesaid books, also threw them in the water ...' (Würzburg State Archive, Würzburg Holdings, School Matters 1114, quoted here in English from Doney 1988, 21; German version in Schraut & Pieri 2004, 181).

In a comment to this report John Christopher Doney states: 'The fact that something regarded as unpopular could receive no greater condemnation than the title "Lutheran" attests to the success of Würzburg's Counterreformation' (Doney 1988, 21). Indeed the simple ABC books, issued by Würzburg printers and used by generations of young people, may with all their limits have contributed to this success.

f) Conclusions

The rediscovery of the three Würzburg ABC books, and particularly that of the German versions, provides an opportunity to reflect on knowledge and knowledge acquisition in the field of the history of primers in early modern Germany. In this concluding part three issues shall be dealt with in brief: (1) the occurrence of the rooster primer, (2) the occurrence of Catholic primers and (3) the challenge of 'lost books'.

(1) As for the rooster primer, according to present knowledge this type of textbook has not been printed and used in all territories of early modern Germany. The consideration of its circulation in the Holy Roman Empire, which includes, among others, the countries of the Habsburg Empire, may help to get a clearer picture. Today we have evidence of rooster primers printed in Northern, Western, Central and Eastern territories of the Holy Roman Empire. Next to such booklets issued in places like Berlin, Bremen, Cologne, Dresden, Hamburg, Leipzig, Rostock, Salzwedel and Wittenberg this includes, for example, an ABC book printed in 1626 in Luxemburg, then part of the Austrian Netherlands – in fact the oldest Catholic German-language catechism primer we are aware of and 'presumably the oldest Luxemburg textbook' (Hierzig 1981, 403). Turning eastwards we also encounter prints in Bohemia and Moravia, among them an edition issued in 1732 in Olmütz (today Olomouc/Czech

▣ Würzburg ABC books

Republic). On the other hand, we have no evidence of rooster primers printed in the early modern period in South German territories like the Margravate of Baden, the Duchy of Württemberg or the Electorate of Bavaria, and the same applies to Switzerland and Austria. In these regions other manifestations of the primer, including *Namenbüchlein*, i. e. primers with lists of nouns, with or without catechetical texts attached, prevailed in this period.⁵ In this context Würzburg comes into play as the southernmost place of publication in early modern Germany identified so far of an ABC book with the picture of the rooster.

(2) 2003 saw the publication of Gisela Teistler's *Fibel-Findbuch*, a bibliography of German-language primers from the beginnings to 1944 – up to the present an indispensable resource in this field of studies (Teistler 2003). Four years earlier Teistler had used the database she had set up for a study on primers as documents of alphabetisation in Germany up to 1850 (Teistler 1999), and in this study she delivers a clear picture of the denominational context: The production of primers, so she argues, begins at the time 'when the reformation spreads in Germany and Luther's translation of the Bible is accompanied by the reformatory eagerness to acquaint the common people in a direct way with the basics of Christian faith in that the people are empowered to learn to read the German language' (ibid., 257). According to Teistler, this rather exclusive link between Protestantism and the development of primers in Germany can be proven up to the 1760s, arguing that until then 'the Catholic West and the Catholic South is continuously lacking a noteworthy production of primers' (ibid., 270).

From today's perspective, drawing from an extended database of relevant primary sources, this statement must be considered obsolete. Even though the great majority of extant and identified primers from the early modern period in Germany has a Lutheran affiliation, the Würzburg prints as well as other Catholic primers published prior to the 1770s are textbooks with specific features and thus indeed 'worth a note' as part of the early history of primers. In addition, these textbooks deserve a closer examination, while such studies may focus on content (catechetical, other religious and secular), on various types of relevant textbooks, including catechisms for early readers ('primer catechisms'), on specific target groups, on the places of print and not least on possible Lutheran models, including the ABC book with the rooster by which Catholic prints may have been guided. Whereas historians of Lutheran catechisms, including Christoph Weismann (1990, 2016) and Jan-Andrea Bernhard (2018), have systematically analysed Lutheran catechetical texts offered as first reading exercises, corresponding Catholic works have to date not found the interest of historians of catechisms.

(3) Taking into account the low survival rates of early printed books, book historians have more recently drawn attention to the issue of 'lost books'. In this sense Andrew Pettegree argues that 'if we are to assess the impact of publishing on the culture and economy of Europe, we have to base these conclusions on a more holistic sense of what was published, rather than merely what libraries have preserved' (Pettegree 2019, 3). In doing so Pettegree points to printed works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which 'were never destined for the shelves of libraries' (ibid., 2), and he classifies small format educational texts – ABC books – and devotional texts as 'types of books that have exceptionally poor survival rates, precisely because they were so intensively used' (ibid., 12-13).

⁵ For example, *Catholisches Namenbüchl*, an illustrated print of 20 sheet, issued in Straubing in 1734, offers, next to letters and lists of nouns with separated syllables – from "A bra ham, A dam, Amb sel" (A3r) to "Zim mer mann, Zoll hauß, Zu cker" (B4v) – also prayers and catechetical texts (B7r-C3v). In contrast, the content of *Neues Nahmen-Büchlein / Für die liebe Kinder / und alte Leuth nutzlich zu erlernen*, an 8-sheet booklet published in Ottobeuren in 1739, is confined to letters, lists of nouns in alphabetical order – from "An fang, A bel, A dam" (A2v) to "Zol ler, Zor nig, Zun gen" (A8r) – and a multiplication table (A8v).

□ Würzburg ABC books

The frequent absence of a title in ABC books in Europe may have been an additional factor which has prevented such prints from inclusion into a library. On the other hand, as the case of the three Würzburg prints reveals, occasionally a copy did find its way into a book collection. In the German case such holdings may at this stage not always be accessible through the *Karlsruhe Virtual Catalogue* (KVK), an otherwise highly useful search engine for books. But even if so, those in charge of title recording (but also scholars) are forced to fabricate – in fact to feign – a title *ex post facto*. Inconsistent practices applied in the fabrication of such titles once again make it difficult to detect relevant materials in library catalogues.

Why does the 1774 Würzburg school ordinance make use of the plural when it declares that from now on 'so-called ABC books' shall be prohibited? What about 'missing links' between the Jacob Hertz and the Franz S. Sartorius editions? There is reason to assume that primers printed in early modern Germany as identified in library holdings so far only represent the proverbial 'tip of an iceberg'. At the same time, aware of the challenges to apply a holistic view on what once has been published, the rediscovery of 'temporarily lost books' can help us to get a deeper understanding of this field of print culture.

Catechisms and primers (in chronological order; DR = Digital Reproduction)

Catechismus In Kurtze Frag und Antwort gestellt, für die gemeine Layen und junge Kinder sehr dienstlich. Durch Petrum Canisium der H. Schrifft Doctor. Gedruckt zu Wirtzburg, durch Henrich von Ach 1581, [64] p. – △ Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum. – Quoted here from *S. Petri Canisii Doctoris Ecclesiae Catechismi Latini et Germanici. Editionem criticam curavit Fridericus Streicher. Pars Secunda: Catechismi Germanici*. Romae: Pontifica Universitas Gregoriana, Monachii Bavariae: Officina Salesiana 1936, 253-264.

A A a b c d e f ... De Loudt Bockstauen ... Gedrucket tho Hamborch, dörch Hans Binder 1583, [2] p. = fragment – △ Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Carl von Ossietzky. – Figure 5: public domain.
DR: <https://resolver.sub.uni-hamburg.de/kitodo/PPN1025247868>

A A a b c d e f ... Die Lautende Buchstaben ... getrückt zu Lutzemburg, durch Hubertum Reuland 1626, [16] S. – △ Luxembourg, Bibliothèque nationale.

Teutsch Lesebüchlein Für die Schulen im Hertzogthumb Francken. Wirtzburg, Gedruckt bey Elias Michael Zinck 1633, [48] p. – △ Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt.
DR: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:urmel-d44d2382-e576-4421-9a0b-a26ffa11ddcb9>

[Volusius, Adolph Gottfried:] Catechismus Biblicus, Das ist: Schrifftmässige Bewehrung der wahren Christ-Catholischen allein seligmachenden in Doctoris Petri Canisii Teutschen Catechismo begriffener Lehr. Editio secunda. Würtzburg, Verlegt durch Hiob Herten 1670, [9], 426 p. – △ Würzburg, University Library.

Alphabet: Divisé par Syllabes, Pour Apprendre facilement à lire en François : A L'Usage de Mesdames les Serenißimes Princesses. Alphabet : Getheilet durch Syllben, Um leichtlich lernen Teutsch zu lesen, Zum Gebrauch derer Durchleuchtigster Fürstinnen. Hannover: Wolfgang Schwendimann 1675, [32] p. – △ Hildesheim, Dombibliothek.

A A a b c d e f ... Die lautende Buchstaben ... Würtzburg, gedruckt bey Jacob Herten n. d. (before 1700), [16] p. – △ Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, 2 G 0042. – Figures 1, 3 and 6 licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 DE.

ABCDEFGH ... Vocale ...VVIRCEBVRGI, Ex officina Typographica Jobi Hertzii n. d. (before 1700), [16] p. – △ Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, 2 G 0042. – Figures 2, 7 and 8 licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 DE.

A A a b c d e f ... Die Laut-Buchstaben ... Ollmütz, durch Frantz Hirnle Factorn 1732, [16] p. – △ Brno, Moravská zemská knihovna.

Catholisches Nahmenbüchl. Das ist: ein sonderbar kurtzer Weeg, bald und leichtlich lesen zu lehren, sowohl für alte als jungen Persohnen / welche nit Zeit haben / lang gemeine Schulen zu besuchen. Mit schönen Bildnussen gezieret / und aufs Neu übersehen. Straubing: bey Cassian Betz 1734, [40] S. – △ Berlin, Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung.

A A a b c d e f ... Salzwedel, gedruckt mit Hellerschen Schriften n. d. (ca. 1735), [16] p. – △ Private Collection.

Neues Nahmen-Büchlein / Für die liebe Kinder / und alte Leuth nutzlich zu erlernen. Ottobeyren / Gedruckt bey Johann Balthasar Wanckenmiller, Anno 1739, [16] p. – △ Ottobeuren, Monastery Library.

DR: <https://www.ottobeuren-macht-geschichte.de/items/show/519>

▣ Würzburg ABC books

[Johann Friedrich Hähn:] Berlinisches neu eingerichtetes A B C Buchstabil- und Lese-Büchlein. Berlin: Im Verlag des Buchladens der Real-Schule 1758, 68 p. – △ Berlin, Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung.

Neu eingerichtetes A B C Buchstabil- und Lese-Büchlein zum Gebrauche der Schulen des Fürstlichen Stifts ... bey unserer lieben Frauen zu Sagan. Nebst einer Vorrede in welcher ausführlich angezeigt wird, worinn der Vorzug bestehe, den diese neue Einrichtung vor der alten hat, und einiger Anleitung von nützlichem Gebrauche dieses Büchels beym wirklichen Unterrichte. [Sagan] 1763, 38, 37 p. – △ Berlin, Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung.

A A a b c d e f ... Die lau ten de Buch sta ben ... Würzburg, gedruckt bey Franz Sebastian Sartorius 1772, [16] p. – △ Würzburg, University Library, 58/Franc.535.2 – Figures 2 and 9 with kind permission by Würzburg University Library.

Regel-mäsiges Les-Buch, oder Christliche Sitten-Lehre zur Les-Übung, für die Schulkinder des Hoch-Stifts Würzburg und Herzogthums Franken. Auf höchsten Befehl Adam Friderichs, Ihres hochwürdigsten Bischofes und gnädigsten Landesfürsten verfertigt und eingeführet 1772. [Würzburg:] David Christian Blank [1772], [2], 130 p. – Munich, Bavarian State Library.

DR: <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb11732372?page=,1>

Neues A, B, C, Buchstabil- und Lesebuch, für Kinder. Mainz, zu finden bey Ferdinand Nickhl 1775, 47 p. – △ Fulda, Hochschul- und Landesbibliothek.

DR: https://fuldig.hs-fulda.de/viewer/image/PPN310211816/3/LOG_0000/

A A a b c d ... Die lautende Buchstaben ... Zu Metz, in der Buchdruckerey des H. Verronnais n. d. [between 1820 and 1830], [16] p. – △ Paris, National Library.

A A a b c d ... Die lautende Buchstaben ... Zu Metz, in der Buchdruckerey des H. Verronnais, neue, verbesserte Aufl. n. d. [between 1820 and 1830], [16] p. – △ Paris, National Library.

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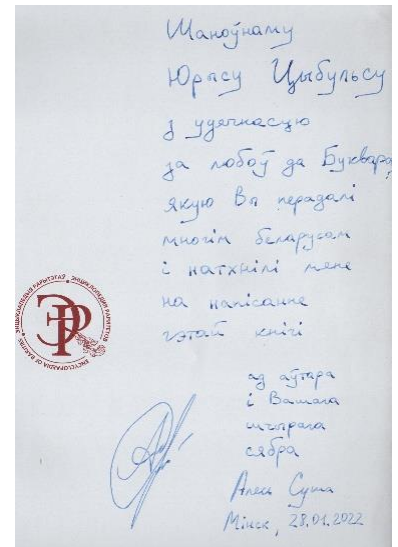
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▣ New Books

Алесь Суша: Беларускі буквар у нацыянальнай і сусветнай прасторы. Мінск: Беларуская Энцыклапедыя імя Петруся Броўкі [Ales Sussha: The Belarusian Primer in the National and World Space. Minsk: Petrus Brovka Belarusian Encyclopaedia] 2021, 336 pp.

Juris Cibuljs



The handwritten dedication to the right reads: "To honourable Juris Cibuljs, with gratitude for the love for the Primer, which you passed on to many Belarusians and inspired me to write this book, from the author and your sincere friend Ales Sussha. Minsk, 28.01.2022."

Ales Sussha's fundamental work covers the historical period from the beginning of the print of the first primer in the Belarusian language in 1618 and ending with the present. The author of the monograph is a well-known bibliologist in Belarus and deputy general director of the National Library of Belarus. The monograph, published with the support of the Ministry of Information of Belarus, is intended both for professional researchers in the history of Belarusian book publishing and for a wide range of readers.

The publication contains extensive historical material, presented on 336 large format pages. It contains eight chapters, 125 paragraphs and 1025 references to published and archival sources. 730 illustrations allow the reader to see how Belarusian-language primers and primers published in other languages in Belarus looked like in different epochs of printing from the seventeenth century to the present day. The book has collected the entire history of domestic textbooks for primary education to the present day. Most of the monuments are completely unknown even to researchers, and their illustrations have been published for the first time. To study and gather the history of Belarusian primers for more than 400 years of their existence, Ales Sussha searched in state archives and museums, as well as in private collections in Belarus, the Czech Republic, Sweden, France, Great Britain, Ukraine, Slovenia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, the USA, Denmark, Italy, Ireland, Austria, Germany, and Russia, because old and even relatively modern Belarusian textbooks have been extremely poorly preserved in Belarus.

The Catalogue of Ancient Editions in the Latvian Language (1525 – 1855), published by the National Library of Latvia in 1999, lists Latgalian primers printed in Polotsk (Belarus) in 1828 or 1829 and in 1829. Judging from the other primers of that time these books might have been printed in the Piarists' printing house in Polotsk. The monograph, however, does not mention any primer in Latgalian having been published in Belarus. Moreover, a chronological table of all primers published in Belarus would have been highly desirable.

Links:

<https://euroradio.fm/en/seminal-work-domestic-textbooks-elementary-grades-published>

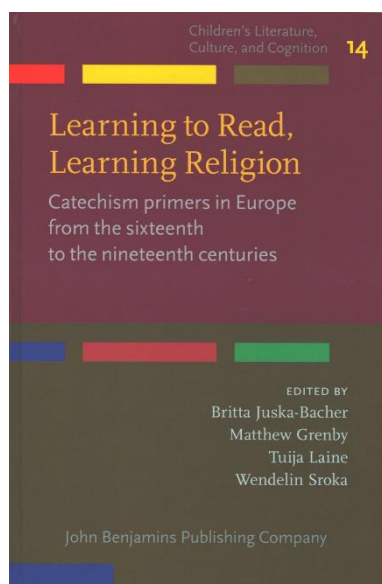
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□ New Books

Learning to Read, Learning Religion. Catechism primers in Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Edited by Britta Juska-Bacher, Matthew Grenby, Tuija Laine and Wendelin Sroka. *Children's Literature, Culture, and Cognition (CLCC), Volume 14.* Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins 2023, 375 pp.

Britta Juska-Bacher & Wendelin Sroka for the editorial team



The idea of bringing together the oldest type of printed reading primers from different European countries in one volume came up at the conference "Religion and Educational Media", organised by the International Society for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media e.V. (IGSBI) in 2017 in Augsburg. At this meeting, IGSBI's Reading Primers Special Interest Group held a workshop "Learning to Read with Catechetical Texts – Historical Approaches" in which it became evident that very similar texts appeared across the continent and the centuries and demonstrated clear potentials for a broader and more systematic transnational analysis of catechism primers. One year later, at the occasion of an IGSBI conference in Brixen/Bressanone, the editors of the present volume organised a panel 'The Catechism Primer: a Transnational, Pluri-Confessional and Multilingual Educational Medium' and gathered some very helpful ideas to go forward with the preparation of the volume. A good four years later (January 2023) it was released in the series 'Children's Literature, Culture, and Cognition' by the John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam. Nineteen scholars have been involved in the project, representing a broad range of disciplines such as book and print, children's literature, education, language teaching and religion. The result of their collaborative effort is a book which offers insights into communalities and differences of the history of the catechism primer in seventeen European countries and regions. In some cases, such as Greenland, the history of catechism primers is dealt with comprehensively for the first time. The volume is available hardbound and as an eBook: <https://benjamins.com/catalog/clcc.14?refer=bq23spring>.

Catechism primers are humble artefacts, and they have so far been studied and described – if at all – mainly as part of the national history of school textbooks, and comparative works have been lacking. To allow comparison across countries a uniform classification and terminology was a prerequisite of the book. Therefore, the volume starts with a classification of relevant prints, based on the proportion and position of catechetical texts and reading course in the primer. The classification comprises four types: firstly, the *primer catechism* as a collection of basic religious texts supplemented by reading material; secondly, the *catechism primer* as a textbook for reading instruction in which the reading exercises consist predominantly of religious texts; thirdly, the *primer with predominantly secular and some catechetical elements*; and fourthly, the *primer with a catechism attached as appendix*. An effort was made to standardise the previously inconsistent terminology and to support the authors in writing their papers. The result of this effort is offered as a glossary of important topic specific terms, included at the end of the volume.

The main part of the book begins with an analysis of catechism primers from different perspectives: the first sub-chapter gives an insight into the quantities, distribution, and use of the catechism primer in Europe, its similarities and differences in the different countries. This is followed by sub-chapters on primers in different denominations, primers as children's literature and the teaching method used (presumably) by the teachers in reading lessons. Essays about catechism primers in seventeen countries or language regions form the core of the book. Northern and Western Europe are particularly well

covered. The series starts with the German case, considering that the German language area played an important role with reference to Reformation and Counter-Reformation. This contribution is followed by essays on catechism primers in Poland, Denmark, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, England, Estonia, the Netherlands, France, French-, German- and Italian-speaking Switzerland, Italy, and Spain. Each essay has been commissioned from an expert in the field, with local knowledge but also an awareness of the larger contexts.

To make the descriptions of the areas comparable not only terminologically but also in terms of content, all sub-chapters in this part follow the same structure. They start with a criteria-led summary of the catechism primers in the country or region in question, presented as a 'Short profile'. This is followed by sections on schooling and religion in the area concerned, on the availability of sources and the current state of research, on different types of catechism primers, their characteristics and history, and a more detailed presentation of two exemplary catechism primers. Links to digital copies of primary sources are provided which allow access for further cross-national research.

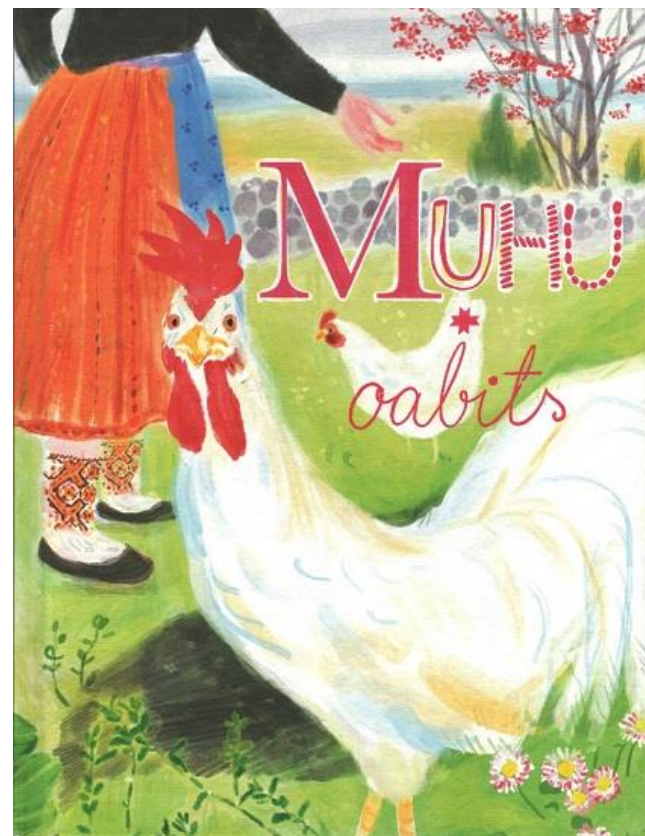
The last chapter offers comparative results and conclusions. The first sub-chapter is based on the "short profiles" of the seventeen areas presented and discusses, for example, the lifespan of vernacular catechism primers from the sixteenth to the nineteenth, in some countries even to the twentieth century, addresses their titles, some of which are completely missing and others that are very extensive, and the linguistic diversity of mono- and bilingual editions of primers. The second sub-chapter demonstrates potentials of a transnational approach by addressing a subset of primers characterised by the image of a rooster as the guiding pictorial motif, the so-called "rooster primer". In considerable parts of Europe, especially in the North, the motif of the rooster stands out in printed texts for beginning readers. In the present volume the rooster is mentioned for Norway, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Estonia, Denmark, Germany, Poland, and the Netherlands (and with one case in German-speaking Switzerland). The essay points out that the history of the particular pictorial motif in the primer goes well beyond the history of the catechism primer in Europe; in some countries, e. g. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, it stretches up to the present, and it includes primers in non-European countries, too.

The main purpose of this volume is to shed light on the catechism primer as a common European heritage and to make relevant knowledge available to the international community. In addition, more themes have come to light which would deserve a closer examination. This applies, for example, to the often gradual and protracted disappearance of catechetical texts in primers, resulting in the longevity of the catechism primer in Europe, despite the early and sharp criticism by representatives of the Enlightenment and the existence of alternatives. Second, an issue that is only briefly mentioned in the book is the impact that the catechism primer had as a European model on primers in other continents: in fact this type of school textbook can also be encountered in Central, North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Australasia. Third, as indicated by the findings presented in Chapter 3, and even though a subject matter for a limited number of specialists, Latin texts play a remarkable role in the history of reading primers in Europe, from Iceland and Finland in the North to Spain and Italy in the South. Fourth, several sub-chapters underline the role of non-book media like hornbooks and "wall primers" in the teaching of reading. In-depth knowledge of the design and content of such media, as well as their interplay with the primers, could provide clues to the practices of schooling. And fifth, focussing on the other side of the coin, the transnational analysis of primers as providers of secular knowledge as well as the accompanying change in teaching methods might provide interesting insights, too.

All in all we trust that the book offers fresh impetus for further research, and we look forward to continued cooperation in the study of this prototype of a textbook for reading instruction across the borders of countries and academic disciplines.

□ Notes

□ Estonia



Kadri Tüür (ed.): *Muhu oabits* [Muhu primer]. Illustrations and design: Riina Uisk. [Koguva]: Muhu Pärandikool 2021, [67] p.

Today there are about 1.1 million people worldwide speaking Estonian as their native language. Discussions on book production often point out the problems of publication for a such small audience. Nonetheless linguists and culturologists in Estonia occasionally address their works to even much smaller target groups, compiling and publishing primers in different dialects.

Since 2009 about a dozen books have been published in Estonia, named as primers, presenting nine different local communities, and

mostly the books are written in a local dialect. Some of these primers have already been introduced in previous publications of the Reading Primers SIG (see Mürsepp 2009 for the *Kihnu aabets*; Mürsepp 2016 and Niitra 2017 for the *Kodavere uavits* and Mürsepp 2021 for the *Pisukase rantlase aabits*).

Why these primers in dialects? The earliest agreements on Estonian written language have been published in dictionaries and grammar books already in the 17th century; positions were upgraded in the end of the 19th century. During the 20th century all publications for different educational levels have been published in official written Estonian language. Why this wave of textbooks in dialects in the beginning of the 21st century?

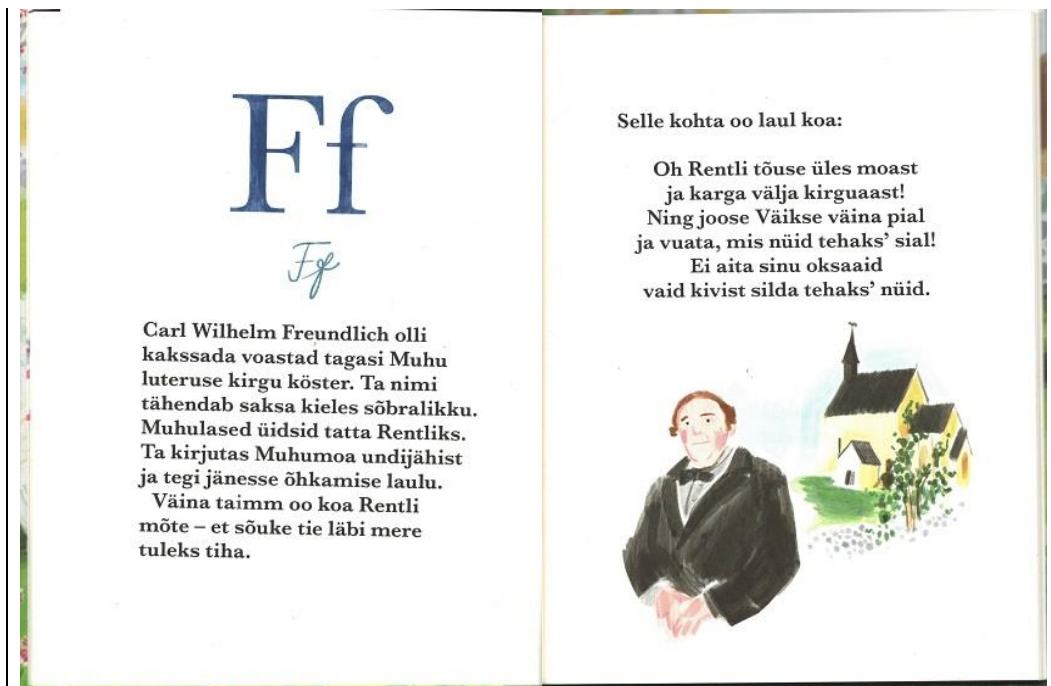
From one side it seems to be a mental competition in its own way: when a certain small community and dialect group is able to publish their own book, others feel that they are not worse and try to do the same.

Mostly the primers in a dialect originate from an island or from another peripheral area of Estonia – areas where the people for many years have suffered of devaluation and discrimination because of their dialect: when their children attended high schools in the cities they experienced inequality because of their mode of speaking. Thus the primers are compiled to empower people's local identity, to value the linguistic diversity and cultural traditions of every place.

Emphasis on local culture and dialect, presented by a primer in a dialect tries to counterbalance the rapid urbanization process that has concentrated social and economic life mostly in the capital Tallinn especially during the last thirty years. Hence the primers in dialects may be treated rather as an effort to preserve local or regional cultural heritage and as an ideological phenomenon than a genuine means to teach reading and writing. At the same time the primers introduce special features of a concrete dialect; usually they include a dictionary and a short introduction to the orthography and phonetics.

Muhu oabits has been compiled by intellectuals – teachers, journalists, researchers – grouped as *Muhu Pärandikool* [Muhu Heritage School]. There are about ten persons who wrote the stories, and the texts have been tested in the local kindergarten.

□ Estonia



Muhu oabits 2021, p. [12-13]

The main elements linking this primer with the general tradition of primers worldwide are the alphabet and short stories to each letter. In addition, the picture of the rooster on the front cover may remind of the rooster primer [Estonian: *kukeaabits*]- a primer with the picture of the rooster [Estonian: *aabitsakukk*] on a prominent place with a long history in Northern and parts of Central Europe. As a rule the so-called foreign letters (C, F, Z ...) are left out from the alphabet in dialect primers, because they are not presented in the older vocabulary used in beginning reading. Also the week plosives B, D, G are sometimes left out because words in the dialect do not begin with these vowels. Yet *Muhu oabits* considers both foreign letters and week plosives. To this purpose it refers to historical persons connected with Muhu island – priest Bobkovski and landlords von Buxhoeveden family for 'B', 'luteruse kirgu köster' [sacristan of the Lutheran church] and writer Carl Wilhelm Freundlich for 'F', and Elisabeth Groth, who introduced perfumes and other products of chemical industry, for 'G'. The introduction of the letter 'I' in *Muhu oabits* starts with the term INTERNET and continues with Ole Golubjatnikov, an ICT scientist in the USA who had spent his early childhood on Muhu island.

In addition there are two leading characters in the primer – a boy Oad and a girl Eed; the stories in *Muhu oabits* tell about children's play and thoughts, about traditional work done in Muhu families, about food, nature and customs. The primer in the Muhu dialect is addressed to the local school and kindergarten, but it serves also as guidebook to the cultural heritage of Muhu island.

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□ Germany



The website www.schulfibeln.de, dedicated to '500 years of the history of early reading instruction', has recently been launched by Horst Bartnitzky, Duisburg (Germany). A collector of reading primers since the 1980s, Bartnitzky uses the holdings of his collection to demonstrate 'how vigorous and manifold the efforts have been and still are at present to encourage children to learn to read'. With a focus on the history of German-language primers the website touches a broad range of perspectives, including methods and contents, images of the child, didactic pioneers and 'time signatures'.

The site offers its content as pdf documents in three main sections: *Überblicke* [overviews], *Fibel-Geschichten* [primer-history/histories] and *Fibel-Porträts* [portraits of primers]. Primer-histories, for example, examine the presentation and use of fables written by Wilhelm Hey (1789-1854) in primers, generations of primers in East Germany 1945 – 1990 and the official methodology in primers of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Portraits of primers are based on an analytical framework which considers six aspects: specific features, methodological issues, content, language, illustration and further development of the schoolbook (if any); the portraits section so far mainly covers textbooks published in Germany between 1945 and 1990. The website will be expanded step by step, and readers are invited to give feedback.

□ Latvia

As a quick welcome present primarily for Ukrainian children who have arrived as refugees in Latvia, the *Droši un Koši* publishing house has in spring 2022 issued a bilingual ABC book:

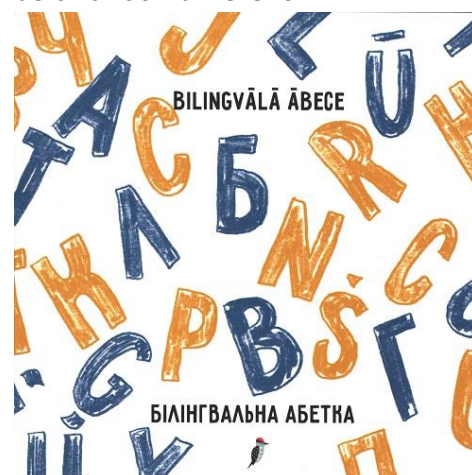
Maša Zurikova: *Bilingvālā Ābece. Latviešu-ukraiņu ilustrētā ābece bērniem – Білінгвальна Абетка. Латисько-українська ілюстрована абетка для дітей* [Bilingual ABC book. Latvian-Ukrainian illustrated ABC book for children]. Droši un Koši 2022, 95 p.

The author has managed to arrange the letters of the Latvian and Ukrainian alphabets in a simple and unusual way, showing the common and the different both in the written system of the two languages and in the reflection of sounds. In addition, the letters are not arranged in alphabetical order, but divided into three groups based on the sound that each letter represents in writing:

1. Pairs of letters that denote similar sounds and look identical.
2. Pairs of letters that denote similar sounds and look different.
3. Letters missing in the other language.

The alphabet will help parents and children to navigate in two different scripts: the Latvian script, which is based on the Latin alphabet, and the Ukrainian script, which is based on the Cyrillic alphabet. Therefore, the book contains both Latvian and Ukrainian alphabets as well as brief explanatory information for its users. Each letter in this alphabet is illustrated with a picture for associative perception.

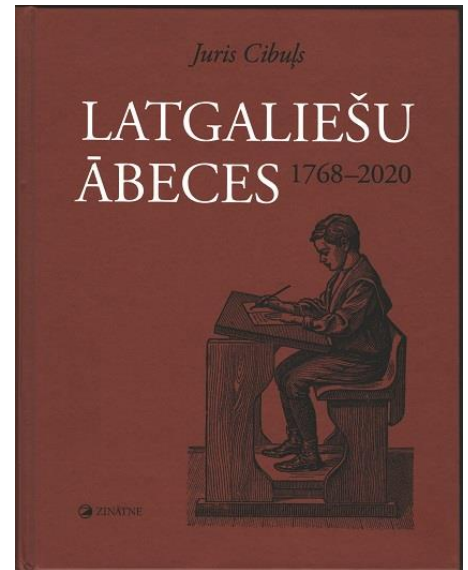
Juris Cibuļs



▣ RP-SIG

▣ Members' News

Revised editions of two books written in Latvian by **Juris Cibuļs**, Riga (Latvia) have been published recently. One of them is *Latgaliešu ābece* [Latgalian Primers] (1768-2020). *Rīga: Zinātne* 2021, 231 pp. The book provides an overview of almost 100 primers which have been published in the Latgalian language. This 'second revised, corrected and supplemented edition' follows the first edition [*Latgaliešu ābece* (1768-2008)], released in 2009 and presented the same year in Issue 1 of RPI. Supplements of the new edition include the consideration of Latgalian primers which have gone to press more recently, an updated version of the chronological list of Latgalian primers and the English-language overview of Latgalian primers originally published in Issues 15 and 16 of RPI. – The other book is *Purlovas grāmata*. *Rīga: Raudava, 3. pārstrādātais, labotais un papildinātais izdevums* [3rd revised, corrected and supplemented edition] 2021, 395 pp. The 'Book on Purlova' acquaints with the history of the village Purlova and the Lazdulejas civil parish of the Balvu region, and it provides an outline of phonetics and grammar of the local subdialect of the Latgalian language. It also offers the vocabulary 'Words of the Purlovas Subdialect of the Latgalian Language in the Data Base Intercontinental Dictionary Series (IDS)' and a primer in this subdialect, compiled by the author according to the sound method. More information about both books is available on <https://www.abc-world.nl/site/news/>.



Dr. **Matthew Grenby**, professor of Eighteenth-Century Studies in the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics at Newcastle University (UK), since 2018 Dean of Research and Innovation, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and, among others, co-editor of *Learning to Read, Learning Religion. Catechism Primers in Europe from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* (see pp. 20-21 of this newsletter), has in 2022 been appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation at Newcastle University. In this position he leads on research and innovation across the faculties at Newcastle as well as at the campuses in Singapore and Malaysia.

Since 2021 Dr. **Eva Matthes**, professor of Pedagogy at the University of Augsburg (Germany) and president of the International Society for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media, acts as Jury Chair of the Georg Eckert Research Award. The biennial award, presented by the Leibniz Institute for Educational Media | Georg Eckert Institute, Braunschweig, honours excellence in academic work in the field of international research into educational media: works in German or English which – topically or historically – relate to cultural, social, political or pedagogical aspects of textbooks and other educational media used in schools. Candidates may put themselves forward or be nominated by others, and an independent panel of internationally renowned academics is responsible to select the winning entry or entries. The award is sponsored by the Braunschweig-based educational publisher Westermann.

<http://www.gei.de/en/awards/georg-eckert-research-award/the-award.html>

Johari Murray, Cáceres/Madrid (Spain), in April 2023 successfully defended her dissertation, *The Transnational Influence of Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice in the Understanding and Production of Children's and Young Adult's Literature* under the co-directors Dr. Kira Mahamud (Universidad Nacional a Distancia) and Dr. Carmen Martínez Roldán (Teachers College Columbia University). Thus, Johari Murray earned her PhD Cum Laude with International Mention at the *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia*. The first part of

her dissertation as well as her other publications can be found here: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Johari-Murray/research>

In addition, the results of a study by Johari Murray have been published in the new monograph *La censura de la literatura infantil y juvenil en las dictaduras del siglo xx* [The Censoring in Children's and Young People's Literature during 20th Century Dictatorship], edited by Ramón Tena Fernández and José Soto Vázquez. Her chapter titled *Legados de la Censura en LIJ estadounidense en el siglo XX* describes how the legacy of censorship from the past mid-century in the US has passed into the XXI century and how these censorship practices have interacted transnationally. The results connect and compare patterns of censorship in US children's and youth literature with those of Spain during the same time period. Also, Johari Murray has provided linguistic support for the *Learning to Read, Learning Religion* book project (see pp. 20-21 of this newsletter).

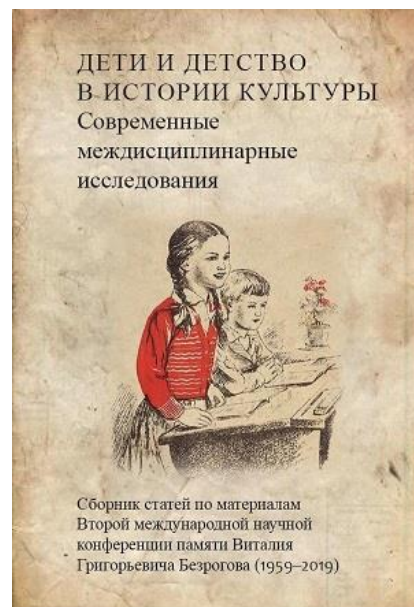
□ New Member

Dr. h.c. **Horst Bartnitzky**, Dipl.-Päd., Duisburg (Germany), born in 1940, has made a career as a teacher, principal, school inspector and department head in school administration. From 2000 to 2010 he served as president of the *Grundschulverband*, Germany's professional association for primary education. He is also an author of numerous publications. Among others he edited two primers, *Unsere Fibel* (1986-1993) and *Die Kunterbunt Fibel* (1993-2012), and his book *Sprachunterricht heute* [Language education today] saw its 19th edition in 2019. Bartnitzky has been a collector of primers for around forty years, and he has recently published the website www.schulfibeln.de. Email: [horst.bartnitzky\(at\)gmx.de](mailto:horst.bartnitzky(at)gmx.de).

□ RP-SIG: Developments and Plans

RP-SIG Panel 'Adults as a Target Group of Primers', December 2021

On December 3-4, 2021, the Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, and the Tula State Lev Tolstoy Pedagogical University hosted the second online conference 'Children and childhood in the history of culture: modern interdisciplinary research. A conference in memory of Vitaly Bezrogov (1959-2019)'. As part of the virtual meeting the Reading Primers SIG held, in collaboration with the organisers of the conference, the panel 'Adults as a Target Group of Primers', with Russian and English as working languages. Contributors of the panel included Luciana Bellatalla, Ferrara (Italy), Maria Cristina Bragone, Pavia (Italy), Zilola Khalilova, Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Harriet Anne Palin, Newcastle (UK), Ekaterina Romashina, Tula (Russia), Wendelin Sroka, Essen (Germany) and Joanna Wojdon, Wroclaw (Poland). Proceedings of the conference have been published as *Deti i detsvo v istorii kultury. Sovremennye mezhdisciplinarnye issledovaniya* [Children and childhood in the history of culture. Modern interdisciplinary research]. Moskva: Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj gumanitarnyj universitet 2022, 212 pp.



IGSBI Conference 'Educational Media for Adults', October 2023

The next Annual Conference of the International Society for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media e.V. (IGSBI) will be held from October 6th to 8th, 2023, at the University of Gdańsk (Poland). As part of the event, under the headline 'Learning to Read, Learning Religion. Amsterdam 2023 – Genesis of a book and ideas for a follow-up' editors and authors will share some lessons learned in the project and discuss conclusions for future work.

<https://www.uni-augsburg.de/en/fakultaet/philsoz/fakultat/pedagogy/news/>