



Networking the Republic of Letters

Neil Jefferies (University of Oxford)

Digitálna knižnica, September 2010



**CULTURES of
KNOWLEDGE**

An Intellectual Geography of the
Seventeenth-Century Republic of Letters





CULTURES of KNOWLEDGE

Google™ Custom Search Search

An Intellectual Geography of the Seventeenth-Century Republic of Letters

[Home](#)

[About](#)

[Oxford Resources](#)

[Resources Elsewhere](#)

[Infrastructure](#)

[Events](#)

[Reference](#)

[Get Involved](#)

[News](#)

News Archive

Select Category

News Tags



Meta

- » [Log in](#)
- » [Entries RSS](#)
- » [Comments RSS](#)
- » [WordPress.org](#)

Home

Networking Intellectual History

Circulating Ideas in Seventeenth-Century Europe



A major international conference at The Royal Society in July 2010.



Funded by a research grant from the [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#) - one of the largest awarded recently to the [University of Oxford's Humanities Division](#) - **Cultures of Knowledge** is an interdisciplinary group of scholars working with partners in Britain and abroad to reconstruct the correspondence networks central to the revolutionary intellectual developments of the seventeenth century. The Project consists of four main strands:

Custom Search

Intellectual
Seventeenth
Republic of Letters

Reference

History

Seventeenth Century Europe



Society in July 2010

Cultures of Knowledge: Components

The Project consists of **four main strands**:

- a) Developing Bodleian resources (catalogues, calendars, editions)
- b) Developing resources elsewhere (calendars, online archives)
- c) Events: Consolidating a scholarly community and refining conceptual frameworks at seminars, workshops, and conferences
- d) Creating the nucleus of a union catalogue

The screenshot shows the website's header with the title "CULTURES of KNOWLEDGE" and a navigation menu including Home, About, Oxford Resources, Resources Elsewhere, Infrastructure, Events, and Reference. Below the menu, there is a "News Archive" section with a "Select Category" dropdown and "News Tags" for "Eighteenth Century" and "Global". A "2010» Conference" banner is visible. On the right, a sidebar features a "Home" link, "Networking Intellectual History", and "Circulating Ideas in Seventeenth-Century E" with an image of a globe and handwritten text.



Union Catalogue: Objectives

- To **combine** the catalogues and calendars generated by the Project to form the nucleus of a union catalogue and archive
- To **publish** it on a scalable and sustainable digital system which allows scholars to contribute their knowledge, data, and expertise
- To **link** this system with similar resources in a manner which allows libraries, archives, and research projects as well as individuals to collaborate in the development of the system



Union Catalogue: Results

- **A new, freely available finding aid** for locating epistolary material across and beyond the broad field of early modern intellectual history
- **A new meeting point** for international scholarship to exchange, publish, and pool archival, biographical, and contextual information
- **A searchable body of data** prerequisite to mapping the ‘intellectual geography’ of the seventeenth-century republic of letters and to analysing the ‘cultures of knowledge’ which developed within it



Data Set 1: Bodleian Catalogue

- **Source:** 'Selden End' card catalogue of c. 500 vols MS letters
- **Basic data:** over 54,000 letters, c.26,000 from the seventeenth century
- **Progress:** scanning and keying (EAD2000) complete; full time editorial work underway for completion by **September 2010**



Data Set 2: Individual Calendars

Correspondences being calendared (*and edited) within Cultures of Knowledge' 2009-2012, many of them early fellows of the Royal Society:



Jan Amos Comenius
(1592-1670)
c. 800 letters



Samuel
Hartlib
(1600-1662)
c. 4,700 letters



John
Wallis*
(1616-1703)
c. 1,700 letters



John
Aubrey*
(1626-1697)
c. 850 letters



Martin
Lister*
(1639-1712)
c. 900 letters



Edward
Lhwyd*
(1639-1712)
c. 2,500 letters

Total Letters: c. 11,500

Back End 1: Architecture and Standards

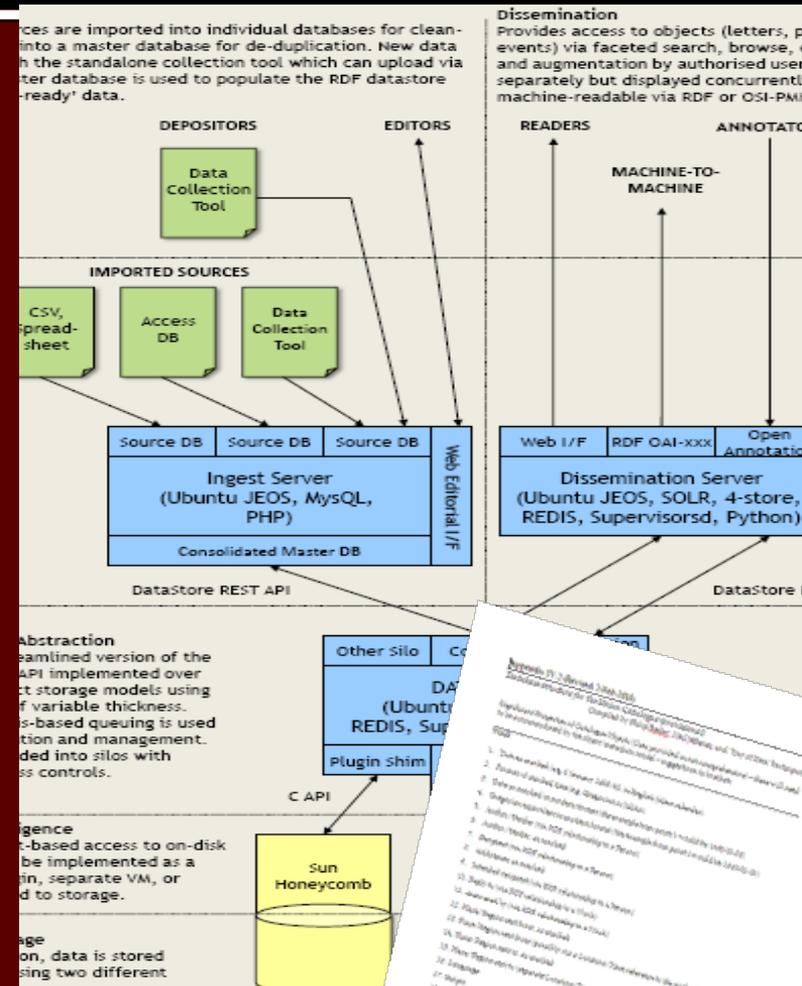
a) System Architecture:

The Digital Asset Management System (DAMS)

Key underlying principles:
Interoperability, scalability,
flexibility, sustainability

b) Metadata standards:

A coherent, consistent way of
describing catalogue objects



Back End 2: Editors and Contributors

a) **Online Data Editing Tool:** A web-based editing interface which will enable authorised users to merge, correct, and enhance existing records

b) **Freestanding Data Collection Tool:** A downloadable offline interface which will allow new collaborators to harvest epistolary metadata and submit it via the web



Edit work

5 Sep 1694: Almeloveen, Theodoor Jansson van, 1657-1712 (Ghent) to Lister, Martin. 1638-1712. ph

Card no. 37 - Last changed: 02 Jun 2010 13:21 by cofikim

[Editor's notes](#) | [Index card image](#) | [Document details](#) | [Authors/senders](#) | [Addressees](#) | [Date of work](#) | [Origin](#) | [Language and content](#) | [Original not](#)

Relevant to Cultures of Knowledge? Yes No Unknown

Editor's notes:

(Shortcut key for 'Save' is S.) (Next/Prev in order of card no.)

[Editor's notes](#) | [Index card image](#) | [Document details](#) | [Authors/senders](#) | [Addressees](#) | [Date of work](#) | [Origin](#) | [Language and content](#) | [Original not](#)

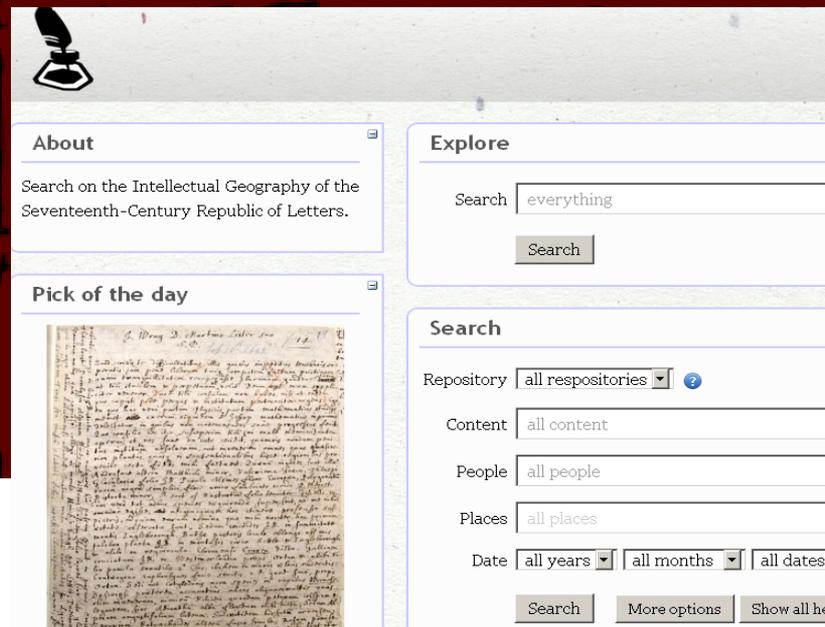
AB ALMELOVEEN (Th.J.) 1657-1712 In Latin Ghent, 5 Nones Sept.
Lister (M.) 1638-1712 1694

MS.Lister 2 f.67

but which he has written
priority. He mentions
on medical writings
issued en bloc in folio by
seen nor the annotated
be a great help if L.
c or private library

Front End: Searching and Browsing

- High-quality metadata on c.35,000 letters (across a possible maximum of 59 fields), detailed abstracts, as well as transcriptions and scans of manuscripts where generated
- Faceted search functions enabling users to query records by any number of fields, to combine and cross-reference fields within single queries, and to refine queries by multiple criteria
- Full-text searchable
- Browse authors
- Links to resources elsewhere
- Save queries and export results in a variety of ways



A Coordinated and Collaborative Approach

- Three digitisation workshops hosted by the Project have established contacts between CofK and other entities with an active interest in the digitisation of early modern correspondences
- Sharing of system architectures and metadata standards with a view to interoperability
- Particularly close relations between CofK, Mapping the Republic of Letters (Stanford), and Circulation of Knowledge (Huygens Institute). OII Case Study.



Beta Launch: 2010 Conference

- **Universal Reformation: Intellectual Networks in Central and Western Europe, 1560-1670**
- St Anne's College, University of Oxford
- 21-23 September 2010
- Evening Plenary (Wednesday 22 September)



Post-Launch Enhancements: Additional Calendars

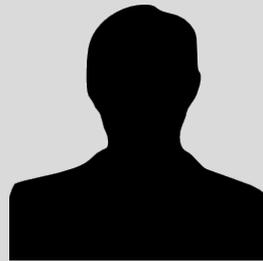
We have obtained permission and are developing a timetable for integrating metadata from the following seventeenth-century correspondences on an incremental basis:



James
Ussher
(1581-1656)



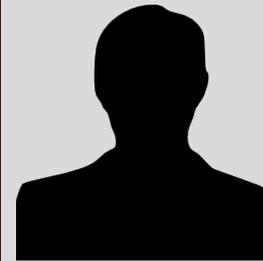
John
Selden
(1584-1654)



John
Dury
(1596-1680)



Johann
Permeier
(1597-1644)
c. 90 letters

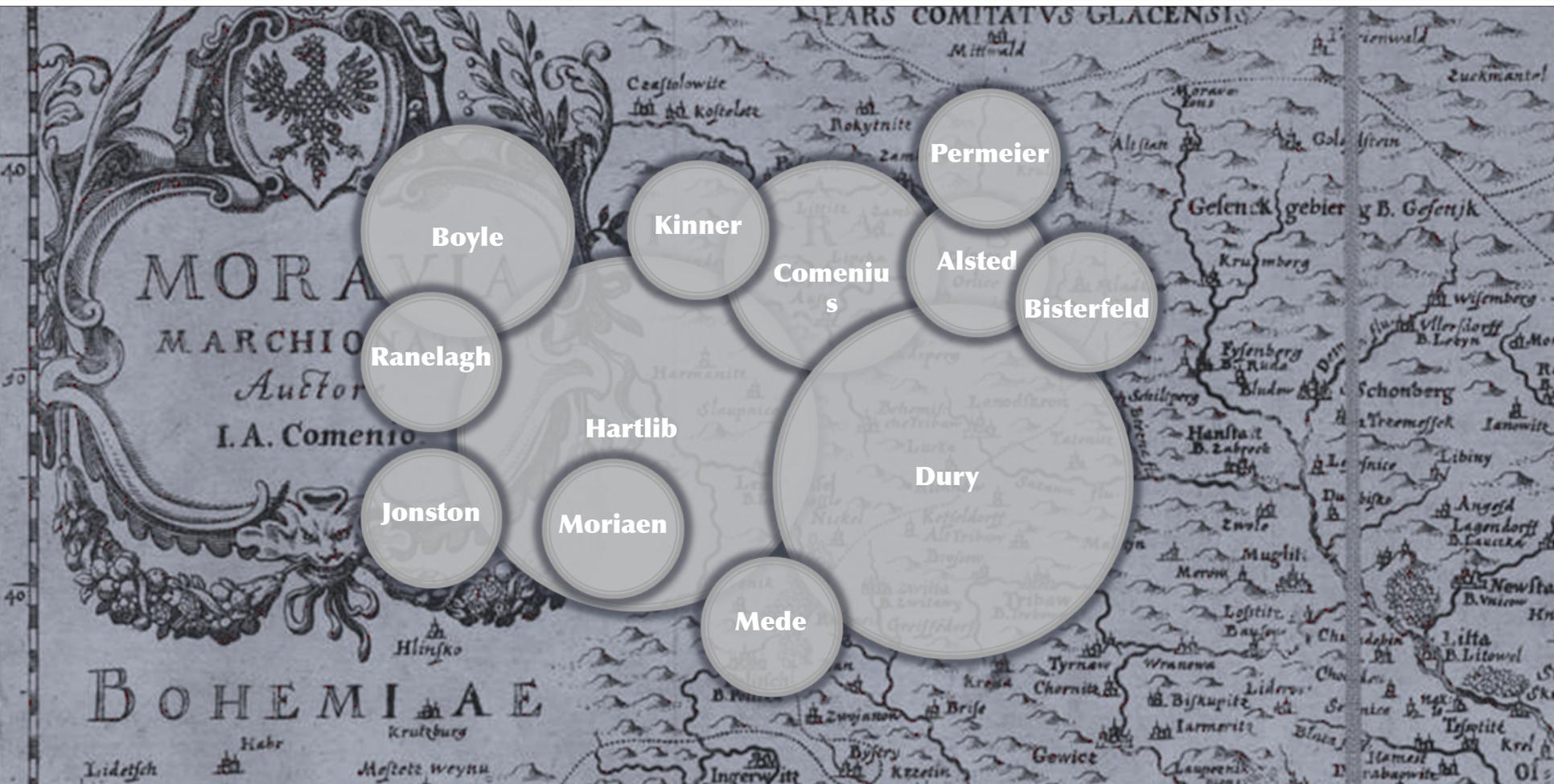


Johann Heinrich
Bisterfeld
(1605-1655)



Antoinette
Bourignon
(1616-1680)
c. 1,200 letters

New Data Sets: Additional Calendars



Post-Launch Enhancements: Bulk Uploads

We are in negotiations with Circulation of Knowledge (Huygens Institute) to upload metadata on seven key Dutch correspondences digitised for inclusion in their online ‘collaboratory’:



Hugo
Grotius
(1583-1645)
c.7,700 letters



Caspar
Barlaeus
(1584-1648)
c.300 letters



René
Descartes
(1596-1650)
c.400 letters



Constantijn
Huygens
(1596-1687)
c.7,300 letters



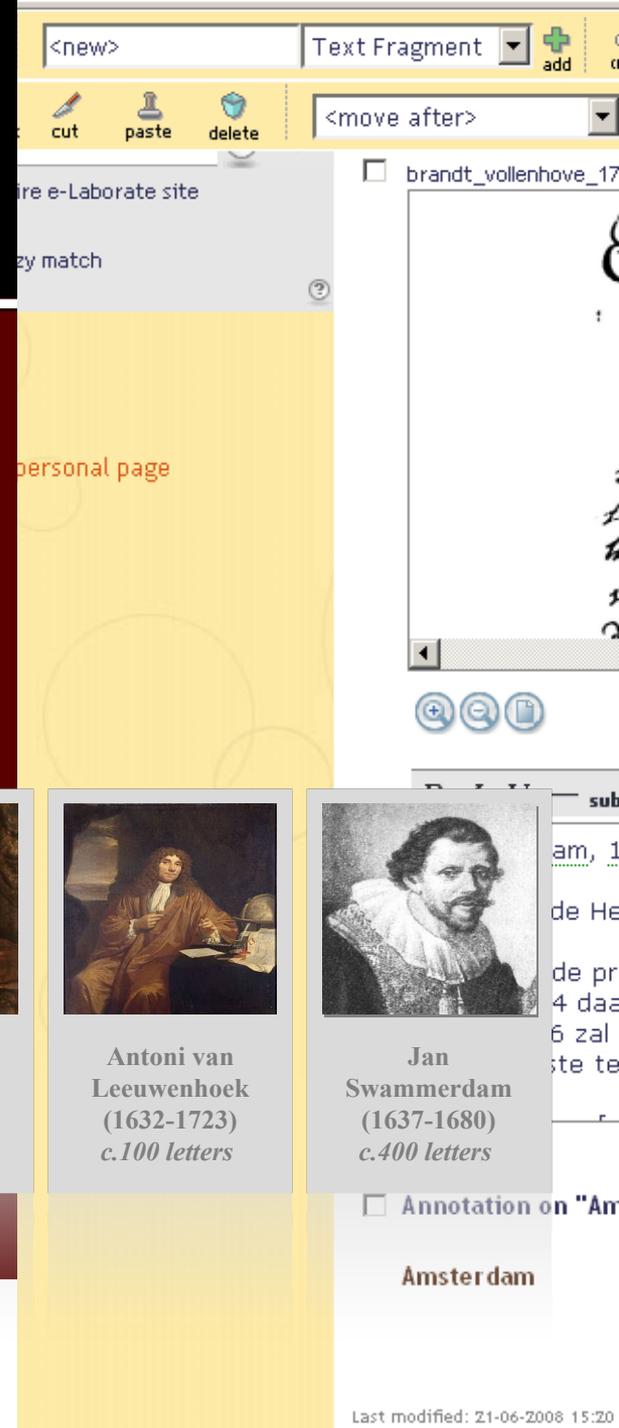
Christiaan
Huygens
(1629-1695)
c.2,900 letters



Antoni van
Leeuwenhoek
(1632-1723)
c.100 letters

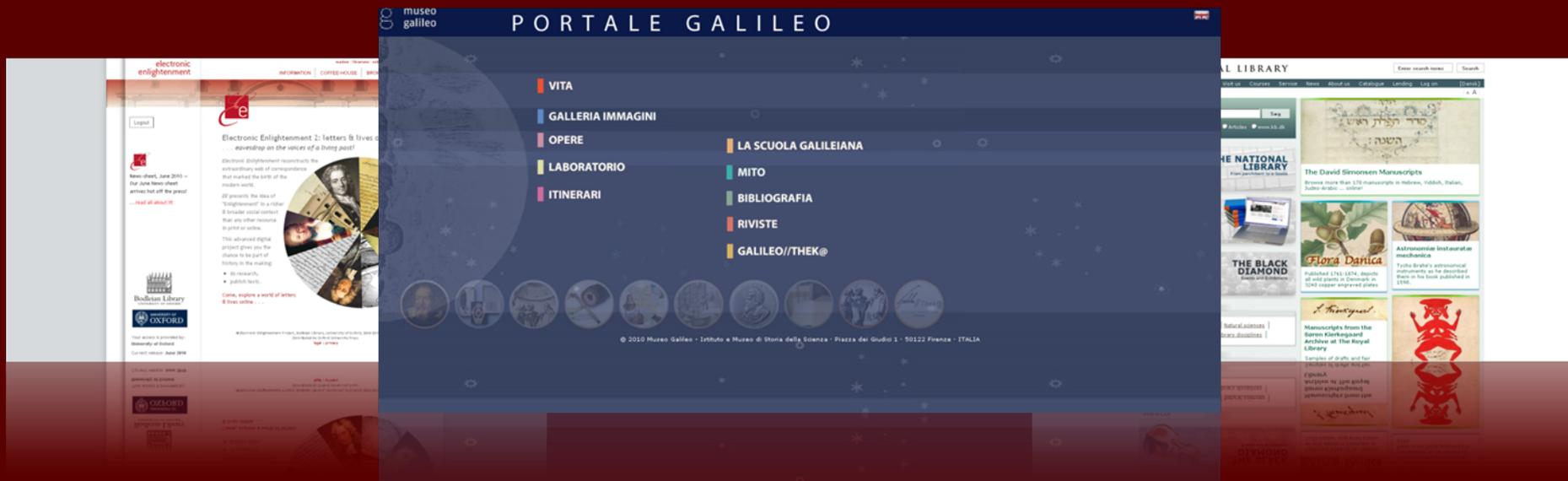


Jan
Swammerdam
(1637-1680)
c.400 letters



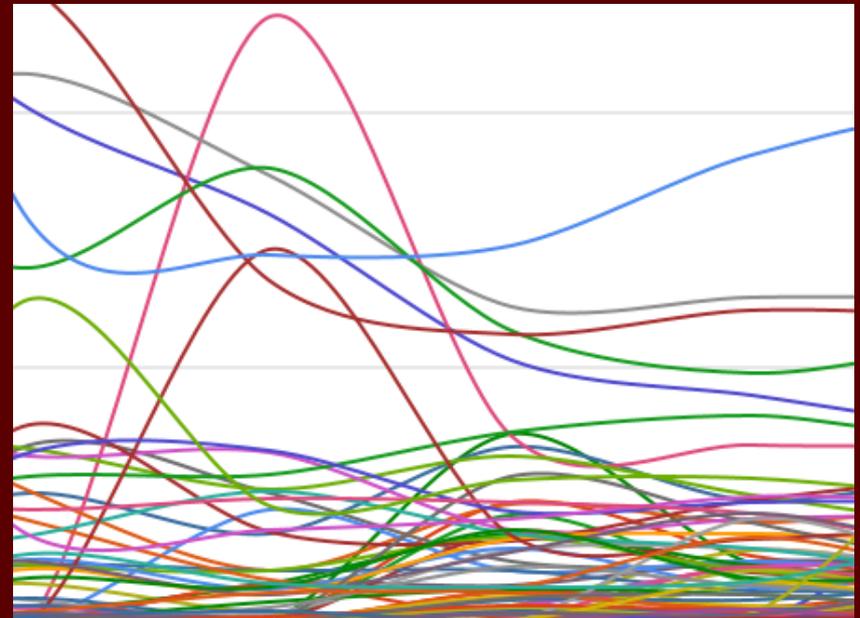
Post-Launch Enhancements: Linking to Databases Elsewhere

We are in negotiations with Electronic Enlightenment (Oxford), Museo Galileo (Florence), and the Royal Library (Copenhagen) to gain access to the metadata on the extensive seventeenth-century correspondences currently within their systems:



Post-Launch Enhancements: New Spatial and Temporal Visualisations

Exciting new geographical renderings of catalogue data by Mapping the Republic of Letters (Stanford) and thematic mapping by Circulation of Knowledge (Huygens Institute):



Conclusions

- Exchange of learned correspondence central to the revolutionary intellectual developments of the seventeenth century and the thread which stitched the Republic of Letters together
- Web-based applications provide us with tools adequate to surveying and visualising epistolary networks in all of their complexity and multilateralism
- ‘Silo’ or proprietorial approaches to digitising correspondence dangerous: our efforts need to be open source, collaborative, interoperable, scalable, distributed, and sustainable if past mistakes are to be avoided
- An example of ‘Circulating Ideas’ in the present: an emerging global network of scholars, technical experts, tools, and resources