READING THE UNWRITTEN: PARATEXTS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS IN EARLY MODERN SCIENCE

University of Wuppertal, 22-23 March 2027

First impressions matter. Being the first words that we read in a printed book, ***Titles*** in early-modern European scientific books carried many important features on what the reader had on their hands. New inventions, with new terminology, needed further remarks on its specific use. John Napier's *Mirifici logarithmorum canonis descriptio* (1614), or Simon Stevin's *De Thiende* (1585) were accompanied by remarks on their usefulness in trigonometry and in other disciplines, thus alluring a vast group of scientists and practitioners. Texts were signed by authors or attributed to them, sometimes even informing the reader about their physical appearance with an ***Engraving***. Still, could we read Euclid's *Elements* in the same way if we are told that it was written by Euclid of Megara, founder of a philosophical school, and not by a more anonymous Alexandrian Euclid? A very difficult exercise, indeed, since this text lacks a ***Preface*** and a ***Dedicatory Letter***, unlike some other ancient Greek treatises.
Scientific books were often dedicated to Dukes, Cardinals, Kings, or to the Pope. Authors had then a space in their books to communicate their intentions, promises for further books, criticisms to other scholars, and even remarks about how one should use their book. So we may wonder: when does the text itself begin? Are the ***Frontispieces, Headings, Dedications, Epigraphs,*** and ***Illustrations*** surrounding the book part of the scientific text? From which collaboration do they spring?

In book history, these highlighted words are often referred to as *paratexts*, a term coined by Gérard Genette. Since the publication of his influential 1987 *Seuils*, research in the history of science has increasingly incorporated such paratexts into the analysis and reconstruction of ideas, their impact, transmission, and preservation. Following this path, we would like to shed light on paratexts and their impact on early modern science in an international conference, held at the University of Wuppertal in March 2027. In two days we would like to address and discuss different perspectives on paratexts and how they can be used as a productive tool for the study of early modern science.

The conference aims to bring together interdisciplinary perspectives and projects in which paratexts play an important role. We expressly welcome topics from outside Europe and from various disciplines. However, the focus is not on a narratological or theoretical examination of the concept of paratexts, but rather on their application in various scientific contexts during the Early Modern period. Possible research questions might include:

- What messages, ideas, or puzzles are hidden in title pages?
- What functions do images and diagrams serve?
- What insights do forewords provide into the origins and intent of a work?
- What do dedications reveal about the sociocultural aspects of scholarship in the Early Modern period?
- How did paratexts influence the compilation of manuscript works?
- In which ways did authors and printers collaborate?
- How are paratexts used to establish a connection to an existing tradition, school of thought, or genre? Are there instances where authors used paratexts in order to distance themselves from such traditions?

- Through which paratextual devices was the discovery of ancient scientific works communicated?
- How did paratexts shape the reception of certain works and ideas?

The conference is scheduled to last two days; the first day will take a broader look at early modern science in general, while the second day will focus on early modern mathematical sciences. We welcome applications from all stages of career (including PhD and Master-Students as well as senior scholars). We aim to compile the results of the conference in a joint publication.

Those interested are asked to send their submission in a single pdf to paratextswuppertal@gmail.com with the following contents:

- proposed title
- an abstract of max. 250 words
- a short CV (max. one page)

The workshop's ambit invites interdisciplinary collaboration. Proposals for papers from all who can contribute to the topic are therefore welcome. Special consideration will be given to proposals from young scholars. The language of the workshop will be English. The deadline for submitting proposals is 9 November. We will do our best to send a confirmation by the end of November.

Accepted Speakers will be provided with a travel expense reimbursement. Those who wish to attend the conference without submitting a paper are kindly asked to send an email. A limited number of spots will be available for interested participants.

If you have any questions about the application or the process, please contact the organizers. This conference is organized by Sabrina Engert, Pablo Gómez Samper, Thomas Morel (History of Mathematics and Its Teaching) and Volker Remmert (History of Science and Technology) from the University of Wuppertal.