

*De l'autorité à la référence*. Isabelle Diu and Raphaële Mouren, eds.  
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*De L'autorité à la référence* gathers together eight essays that were first presented as conference papers in Venice at the 2010 Renaissance Society of America annual meeting. Encompassing a long historical range — from the twelfth to the sixteenth century — and covering major publishing centers like Basil, Lyon, Paris, Florence, and Venice, this collection attempts to illustrate the continued reliance on manuscripts as authoritative texts during the transition from manuscript to print culture, while also demonstrating that the use function of manuscripts in the knowledge of economy of early modern Europe underwent a radical change in this period. As many of the articles in *De L'autorité à la référence* make clear, printed editions of classical texts continued to be based on the study and comparison of medieval manuscripts, but such editions increasingly established their own authority in a new manner. As Diu and Mouren put it in their introduction, “with the passage from manuscript to print and the development of knowledge networks in Renaissance Europe, scholarship beg[an] to lean on the notion of ‘reference,’ which supplant[ed] that of ‘authority’ [*auctoritas*]” (6).

Though a reference text refers to an influential, early modern, manuscript-based printed edition of a Greek or Latin text for almost all of the authors in this collection, each author employs the term *reference* in a slightly different way. Affirming Malcom Parkes's idea that the late medieval manuscript culture differed more radically from that of earlier periods than from the print culture of the fifteenth and even of the sixteenth century, Paola Degni shows that the editors working for Aldus Manutius relied on borrowed manuscripts and manuscripts commissioned from professional scribes to put together editions of medical texts such as the Galen of 1525 and the Hippocrates of 1526, which became the established — or reference — editions of these works (16).

Similarly, Raphaële Mouren describes a “reference text” (22) as the work of a “scientific editor” (23). For Mouren, this editor is a humanist scholar like Piero Vettori, who employed Medici manuscripts to compile editions of classical works like his 1551 Clement of Alexandria and his 1576 Sallust on Medici manuscripts, even if his yet-unknown name was never featured on these works’ title pages. Isabelle Diu, on the other hand, considers the reception of patristic literature from medieval collections of *sententiae* to early modern reference editions of the church fathers. The latter are not only philologically sound, but are complete and integral editions, with running titles, indexes, tables, and book or chapter divisions (70). For Diu, a reference text looks a certain way and features a certain type of paratextual material. Approaching the issue from another perspective, Martine Furno considers the multiple corpora of reference (98) that an edition may incorporate. She shows that Paulus Manutius and Giovanni Griffio’s 1550 edition of Ambrogio Calepino’s dictionary makes use of both a classical, “ancient and scholarly” corpus and a vernacular corpus of contemporary literary references (91).

Many of the general claims made by the contributors to *De L'autorité à la référence* are not new. One can cite a number of monographs that chart the development of early modern scholarly practices and the emergence of reference editions. For lack of space, I will mention just two: Anthony Grafton’s *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800* and Pollie Bromilow’s *Authority in European Book Culture: 1400–1600*. Thus the strength of the volume lies in the particular case studies that it provides. While many essays do indeed bring to light interesting and important discoveries — Eliana Carra’s discovery of the manuscript original of Giovanni Battista Adriani’s *Letter on the Art of the Ancients* is an astonishing find — the collection falls short in certain of its contributors’ failure to find a balance between argument and exposition. While some essays make use of sweeping generalizations, others provide a wealth of detail but fail to make their stakes clear until the very end. That is to say, like many collections organized around conference panels, this otherwise well-structured volume would benefit from a stronger editorial presence that would encourage individual pieces to more adroitly cross the line between conference paper and article and to speak more directly to one another.

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