

**COST-Action IS1310 ‘Reassembling the Republic of Letters’
Training School**

R E P O R T

EMLO ‘on the road’

The EMLO ‘on the road’ Training School was held at the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, Tallinn, Estonia, between Wednesday, 14 March and Friday, 16 March 2018. The aim of this COST-funded workshop was to teach participants to collate, standardize, and prepare early modern correspondence metadata for publication in a format compatible with a union catalogue whilst meeting simultaneously the needs and requirements of the contributing scholar’s own work and focus of research.

The workshop was organized at the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre by Kristi Viiding (Senior Researcher, UTKK Tallinn), with the assistance of Marin Jänes.¹ The sessions were devised and led by Miranda Lewis (Editor and Manager, Early Modern Letters Online [EMLO]), with the assistance of Charlotte Marique (Editorial Assistant, EMLO). EMLO is a freely accessible union catalogue of the metadata of sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century correspondence that has been developed by the Cultures of Knowledge project at the University of Oxford to investigate the shape and extent of the Republic of Letters.² This picture will be not be complete, however, without correspondence from central and eastern European provinces. In recognition of this, and in reflection of the COST Action’s own policies, this Training School was funded by a supplementary grant made available in the first instance to ‘Inclusiveness and Target Countries’ and, due to the number of applications, priority was shown to applicants from these countries.³ Early career scholars had been encouraged to apply, as had representatives from institutions with large holdings of early modern correspondence, as well as individuals prepared to help disseminate the taught epistolary standards, techniques, and tools in their scholarly communities. In the selection process, preference was shown to scholars working on correspondences intersecting with the broad international republic of letters, but the committee included representatives from a wide range of disciplines and research. Fourteen applicants were offered places — nine men and five women — from eleven different European countries. All fourteen offers of places were accepted and taken up.

The workshop consisted of ten sessions arranged over two-and-a-half days. Each session was an hour-and-a-half in length. Miranda Lewis gave nine informal presentations in total and conducted numerous live demonstrations. Five metadata collation sessions were arranged, together with three scheduled ‘clinics’ at which it was possible for participants to benefit from one-on-one time with the Trainer or the Assistant Trainer. Informal round-table discussions took place daily. Using tools developed by EMLO specifically for metadata preparation, and in combination with standards that enable interoperability, participants learnt how to collate and structure epistolary metadata

¹ Details of the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre may be found at: <https://www.utkk.ee/en>.

² Early Modern Letters Online may be accessed at: <http://emlo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>. Details of the Cultures of Knowledge research project may be found at: <http://www.culturesofknowledge.org>.

³ Inclusiveness and Target Countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Estonia; Latvia; FYR Macedonia; Greece; Hungary; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Serbia; Slovakia; and Slovenia.

for publication in a union catalogue. Attendees were shown how to take advantage of pre-existing, standardized early modern person, place, and repository metadata, together with relevant associated authority file references and links. Each session was tailored to help clarify specific issues and problems that tend to arise in the course of work on, and research with, epistolary metadata assembled from a wide range of sources and in pre-existing formats. The training included hands-on practical tutorials and detailed discussion on the nature of metadata and why it should be collated. The benefits of a union catalogue were explained, and discussions encouraged around issues encountered when working with early modern correspondence. Guidance was provided on recommended style and standards as well as on the difficulties caused by the dates and calendars in use during the early modern period, and on copyright and image rights. Training was given to all participants in the webform and spreadsheet methods of metadata preparation as well as in the use of the EMLO Recon tool for reconciliation of people and place records. Eleven of the participants brought their own data to work with during the Training School; two used sample data provided by Miranda Lewis; one focussed on abstracts for letters records already in EMLO. Once participants had decided which method of metadata preparation suited their workflows and their correspondences, they divided into parallel groups, one to work with spreadsheets, the other with the online form. The sessions were conducted in English. Supporting documents and guides were provided. Each participant received a username and password to a private workspace in EMLO, and was provided with copies of EMLO's contributor files as well as access to EMLO's reconciliation tools.

Overall, a number of epistolary catalogues worked on during the Training School will be published in EMLO in the course of 2018, including the correspondences of Boldizsár Batthyány (d. 1590); Iohannes Dantiscus (1485–1548); and David Hilchen (1561–1610), and it is anticipated that a number will be completed and published thereafter.⁴ By way of follow-up assistance, Miranda Lewis and Charlotte Marique circulated their contact details, and Miranda Lewis is available on an ongoing basis via Skype should participants require individual assistance or further advice. It is to be hoped that the Training School participants will take advantage of the continued support and assistance on offer.

Miranda Lewis
21 May 2018

⁴ Over the course of the three days, the correspondences worked with included those of Johann Christian von Boyneburg (1622–1672); Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) and Johann Ernst Gerhard (1621–1668); the Kornis family from current day Romania; Albert Szenci Molnár (1574–1634); Antun Vrančić (1504–1573); 15th-century Ottoman dignitaries to their counterparts in the Republic of Ragusa written in Old Slavonic; and the letters of Byzantine refugees in the West (1453–1500).