In the first 150 years of European printed book production, between 1450 and 1600, the new medium of print evolved from its indebtedness to manuscript culture into a full-grown means of communication and articulation. The development of print culture added new impulses to the dynamic relations between Latin and the vernaculars. While initially the majority of titles were printed in Latin, the vernaculars gained ground as languages of arts and sciences, commerce, religion, and literary expression.

This conference explores how reading experiences were shaped both by producers and users of vernacular books. We approach reading as an embodied, material practice that is affected both by texts and their presentation, with a particular interest in the interplay between language, form and content, and between intended and actual readers. By adopting an international and interdisciplinary perspective (combining book history, literary history, art history, religious studies, and history of knowledge) during the conference and within the foreseen volume, we aim to contribute to the next step towards a comparative study of printing strategies and users’ practices in the first 150 years of printing vernacular books in Europe. Placing studies of (reader’s responses to) books in various languages and with a variety of texts (scientific, literary, religious) next to each other, we hope to reach a transregional view and an interdisciplinary interpretive framework of the early printed vernacular book.