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A Report from the International Scientific Conference Titled *Egodocuments and Privacy in the Early Modern Era*, Lodz, 19–20 October 2023

The international conference titled *Egodocuments and Privacy in the Early Modern Era* was organized by Dr hab. prof. Michaël Green, Dr hab. prof. Małgorzata Karkocha, and Dr Joanna Orzeł from the Faculty of Philosophy and History at the University of Lodz. The conference, which included twenty scholars from Poland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Ukraine, France, and Spain, was conducted under the auspices of Academic Lodz Foundation (Fundacja Łódź Akademicka), Radio Łódź, the Rector of the University of Lodz, and the Dean of the Faculty Philosophy and History. The conference featured sixteen papers, all revolving around the two topics, namely egodocuments and privacy, which in the past five years have drawn renewed attention from scholars in various historical disciplines represented at the conference: social and cultural historians, historians of law, art and literature, delivered talks where their own perspective was at the core. The goal of the conference was to bring together scholars working on similar sources and similar topics but in different disciplines.

The conference commenced with a welcome word by Dr hab. prof. Łukasz Jan Korporowicz, Vice-Rector for Research of the University of Lodz from the Faculty of Law and Administration, Dr hab. prof. Dariusz Jeziorny, Director of the Institute of History, and Prof. Maciej Kokoszko, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and History. The first talk of the conference, delivered by myself, was an overview of the recent developments in the two fields: egodocuments and privacy, where I attempted to establish a clear connection between them.



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My talk was followed by that of Prof. Korporowicz, who, taking the legal history perspective as a key, analysed the egodocumental sources of Sir James Mackintosh and the way they reflected his opinion on criminal law and legal practices. Particular attention was given to Mackintosh's plan for juridical reform and reactions to it.

The second panel focused on travelogues. Dr Jørgen Mührmann-Lund (University of Copenhagen) discussed the travel book of the Danish nobleman Christian Güldenchrone (ca. 1700), who travelled to Poland and Sweden on various diplomatic missions. The accounts were mostly impersonal, and the question posed was whether the source could be classified as an egodocument, and how its private dimension could be brought forward. Dr Tsila Rådecker (an independent scholar) examined a travelogue from 1764 of a Jewish Amsterdammer named Abraham Levie. The document gave an account of daily life on the road, and Rådecker illuminated the public-private dichotomy, focusing on how the author dealt with the dangers of 'private' religion (Jewish) being situated in the 'public' (Christian) religious culture.

Panel three was dedicated to womens' egodocumental writing. In her paper, Dr Anna Kowalcz-Pawlik (University of Lodz) discussed Elizabeth Cary, a dramatist and a translator, and the way that she negotiated her own self in her work and correspondence. Dr Joanna Orzeł (University of Lodz) examined several examples of memoirs written by women in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the turn of the nineteenth century, focusing on their motivation to do put their experiences on paper, which was often seen as a private endeavour. This panel was followed by the first keynote lecture was delivered by Dr Rudolf Dekker (Centre for the Study of Egodocuments and History), who in the 1980s and 1990s popularised the term 'egodocument' in the research community and conducted a major project on the inventory of Dutch egodocuments. In his lecture, he focused on the fascinating topic of writing memoirs during one's prison term while pointing out the privacy element in this special secluded setting. The talk gave an analysis of sources spanning five hundred years: from the 16th to the end of the 20th century.

The first paper of the fourth panel was delivered by Prof. Jakub Basista (Jagiellonian University), who analysed privacy elements in the Virginia Narratives of Captain John Smith as a tool for self-promotion, specifically in the changes introduced in two editions of the text. In the thought-provoking talk of Dr Natalia

Voloshkova (Kazimierz Wielki University), the discussion revolved around spaces of privacy designated in conversation and writing by the Bluestockings, based on the example of the eighteenth-century diarist Mary Hamilton.

Panel five was opened by Prof. dr hab. Katarzyna Kuras (Jagiellonian University), who concentrated on the issue of privacy of a princely dynasty, by analysing the correspondence of the Wettin family. In turn, Dr doc. Olga Gaidai (University of Warsaw / Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University) examined the diary of the physician Dr Franz Karl Heinz and the way he dealt with the privacy of his patients in this text.

The conference continued the following morning with the second keynote lecture, delivered by Prof. François-Joseph Ruggiu (Sorbonne Université / Oxford University), who has been conducting research into *écrits du for privé*, a French term similar to that of the 'egodocument', though with a broader scope. The lecture was dedicated to the fine line between the notions of intimacy and privacy in early modern French sources, and the way that these notions can be deduced from the original early modern text.

Dr Gijs Versteegen (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos) opened panel sixth, which was focused on the elite. His paper confronted an egodocument which turned out to be false, namely *Libro Aureo De Marco Aurelio* by Antonio de Guevara, intended to serve as a princely mirror for the Emperor Charles V of Spain. Dr Ineke Huysman (Huygens Institute), a specialist in the life and writings of the Dutch statesman Johan de Witt, discussed how privacy-related aspects come to the fore in his very large preserved correspondence, in particular when related to daily life.

The final seventh panel comprised three papers, the first of which was delivered by Dr Jakub Węglorz (University of Wrocław), who analysed the manner in which Polish letters depicted health issues and bodily functions, often considered embarrassing or overly exposing. In the next paper, Laura Prins (Amsterdam UMC / Utrecht University) also dealt with a medical issue: the use of egodocuments by eighteenth-century physicians and psychiatrists in order to determine pathological mental and physical disorders in famous people of the time. The last paper of the conference was delivered by Dr hab. Olga Morozova (University of Warsaw / Boghdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy), and Dr hab. prof. Marek Mikołajczyk (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), which engaged with private travel accounts of Westerners visiting early

modern Poland, intended for a small circle of family and friends, where personal opinions were exposed.

The conference closed with a discussion on the future of the study of egodocuments in relation to the rising interest in the history of privacy. An important conclusion was the need for information exchange between scholars in order to promote intellectual dialogue. Consequently, this conclusion was adopted by the initiative of the Group for the Study of Egodocuments established by Nicolaus Copernicus University of Toruń and the University of Lodz, which now offers a newsletter and coordinates an academic network of scholars working on egodocuments, as well as conducting regular seminars online (egodocuments@umk.pl). As another outcome of the conference, it is worth mentioning the publication of an edited volume, which is envisaged as part of the newly founded series at Brill – Studies in the History of Privacy.

Two keynote lectures of the conference have been recorded and are accessible on YouTube on the channel Historians in Conversation (<https://www.youtube.com/@HistoriansinConversation-tw1xf>), and through the following links: Rudolf Dekker *The Privacy of the Prison. Writing About Yourself in Jail, 1500–2000* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxkO1gAuWiY>), and François-Joseph Ruggiu *What Was Private in Early Modern Privacy?* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnORLuAl9Us>).

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