



Booksellers' Catalogs: new perspectives for literary studies

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Books released today have an efficient marketing system able to reach hundreds, thousands and even millions of people in just a few minutes. Authors, who are in constant contact with readers on social networks, present their most recent creations on their profiles, which soon come to be known by their followers and many other web surfers through successive sharing. Publishers benefit from this kind of publicity, yet they do not stop doing their work and turn to different ways of promoting their products. And, yet again, the importance of the internet is made apparent through ads on webpages or exclusive sites maintained by each publisher, whose purpose is to present or even sell its published products. Even with the internet's impact, publishing houses continue to invest in publicity for their books printed in media such as journals, magazines and catalogues.

In one hundred years from now, we do not know how a researcher who wishes to understand the bookselling market and literature of the twenty-first century will go about collecting this data and discover the books available in the virtual space, or if that will even be possible, since this information is so ephemeral and appear at the same speed as they disappear, replaced by new items. On the other hand, the researcher who is interested in studying the book trade and books in circulation in the past can now rely on information that were saved on various printed sources, such as periodicals, books, library catalogues and booksellers' catalogues, which, however, also endured losses over time.

Booksellers and publishers in the nineteenth century developed elaborate publicity strategies and made use of modern means of broadcasting and distribution available at the time, thanks to the growth of the press, the expansion of ground and maritime transportation, and the introduction of the telegraph. Aiming at introducing the reader to their full repertoires, booksellers delivered catalogues, a type of inventory that listed the titles available for sale in

their establishments. These catalogues, printed as brochures, were published at a certain frequency and periodically updated to include new titles and distributed among readers throughout the country, and, in some cases, abroad.

The way that the books were presented in these catalogues varied according to the choices made by each bookseller. The titles could be organized in alphabetical order, grouped in sections according to subject area (such as education, religion, science, literature, novellas and varieties) or even by author name. Some bookseller-publishers found ways of highlighting the product of the house among the other books, through distinct symbols, such as the use of asterisks, for example, or by means of the insertion of critical reviews, for the purpose of promoting their own publications. These catalogues were also provided to the public in abridged versions called extracts, and were published on the last pages of publications in book, journal and magazine formats.

If at that time this material was solely meant for publicity, the permanence of these documents in posterity made their use change in meaning, and transformed them into rich sources for research on the book market and literature of the nineteenth century, due to the diversity of perspectives of analysis that they provide. Through booksellers' catalogues we can find out such things as which books were advertised most and put forth hypotheses for understanding the reasons for prominence. Although evidence of certain works in the advertisements does not mean that they were more sought after or more read, cross-referencing this information with other primary sources enables the understanding of the insistence in terms of the very titles and their permanence in the market. Another aspect that can be analyzed in the catalogues is the identification of the presence of books according to their original language, i.e., through these sources it is possible to infer what the market share of local and foreign works was in the book trade, which furthers the understanding of the role that translations and domestic works played in establishing the literary repertoire. Catalogues also demonstrate the impact that the business of publishers and booksellers had on shaping Brazil's appreciation for letters and in establishing the field and professional training of writers. The strategies adopted by each bookseller or publisher of a given country expressed in these catalogues can also be the subject of comparison and thus reveal the similarities and differences of their performance.

Among the most prominent bookseller-publishers in Brazil are the Frenchman Baptiste-Louis Garnier and his German competition, who were all established in Rio de Janeiro, the brothers Eduardo and Henrique Laemmert.

Garnier, a member of the famous French bookseller-publisher family, moved to Brazil in the 1840s with the goal of working with his brothers to expand their business in the New

World. However, he decided to start his own establishment, which became one of the greatest in the sector in the country and was credited for the publication and, in part, for the celebrity of works by Brazilian authors, such as José de Alencar, Machado de Assis, Bernardo Guimarães, among others. Besides the investment in domestic literature, Garnier edited and published many translations of French novels, as can be seen in his catalogues and advertisements.

The Laermert Brothers also had a successful business that lasted a long time, and that at times invested in niches that Garnier did not explore, yet also engaged in open competition in selling popular foreign works, for example.

Off the court, other booksellers also published and distributed catalogues, such as Anatole Louis Garraux, whose bookstore in São Paulo served, among others readers, the academic community of the Law School which did not only acquire school books, but also literary works for leisure in a city that did not have many attractions.

All of them, just like other bookseller-publishers, distributed their catalogues throughout the country, promoting the material they had for sale. They therefore benefitted the circulation of printed materials and the booksellers established in the most varied corners of the country.

From now on, the public will have access to some of these catalogues, gathered by the Transatlantic Circulation of Printed Material project directed by Márcia Abreu and Lúcia Granja. They will be made available on the links found at this site and will be a source to be consulted by many other researchers interested in uncovering how the bookselling trade worked and to cast a fresh glance upon the literature of the nineteenth century.

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