

Scholars and Literati at the University of Molsheim (1621–1793)

David de la Croix

IRES/LIDAM, UCLouvain

This note is a summary description of the set of scholars and literati who taught at the University of Molsheim from its inception in 1621 to its dissolution in 1793.

1 SOURCES

The main source was the comprehensive list of professors teaching in Alsace presented in Berger-Levrault (1890) and Berger-Levrault (1892). This source can be misleading because it mixes scholars from the two different institutions in the region: the Protestant University of Strasbourg and the Catholic University of Molsheim. To complicate matters, the University of Molsheim moved in 1701 to the city of Strasbourg, to become the Episcopal University of Strasbourg. This summary covers the Catholic University of Molsheim under its different forms, both in Molsheim and in Strasbourg.

2 THE UNIVERSITY

The strength of the Protestant Reformation in Strasbourg put pressure on Catholic institutions. In 1580, the Jesuits established a school in Molsheim. This school acquired the status of university in 1611. Molsheim was part of the Holy Roman Empire until 1648, when it found itself located on the French side of the border. Later on, when the French kingdom expanded east and Louis XIV conquered the city of Strasbourg, the Catholic university moved to Strasbourg, leaving a simple college in Molsheim. In Strasbourg, it was called "Séminaire épiscopal" and became "Université épiscopale" in 1701. When the Jesuits were expelled from the country in 1765, they were replaced at the university by secular priests. During the Revolution, when the priests had to swear allegiance to the Convention, most professors at the university emigrated. Like all its sisters, the university was officially dissolved by the Republic in 1793.

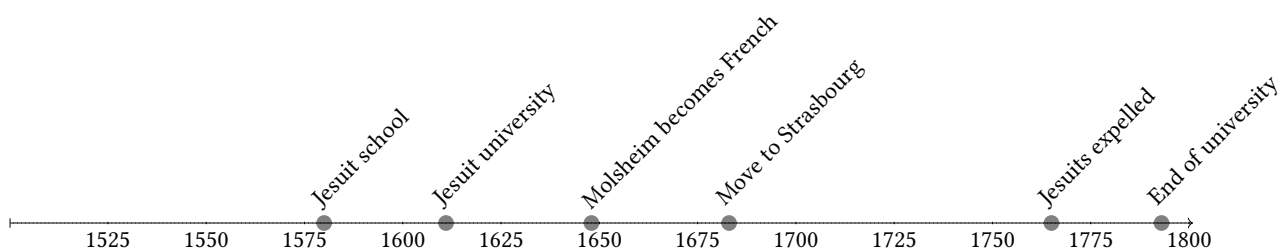


Figure 1: Timeline of the University of Molsheim

3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics. It is interesting to compare them with those for the nearby University of Strasbourg (De la Croix 2022). Overall, 399 scholars are linked to the University of

Molsheim – more than for Strasbourg (274). We observe the year and place of birth for more than 90% of them.

The average age at first appointment was around 38 years, except at the beginning when older scholars were hired. Longevity fluctuates around a level that is 3 years higher than for the University of Strasbourg.

The median distance between the places of birth and activity is relatively high, and much higher than for the University of Strasbourg where more than half of the scholars were from the city of Strasbourg.

The coverage of scholars in Wikipedia is very low, but the coverage in Worldcat is average. Overall, 31.6% of the scholars appear in Worldcat, compared to about 35% in the full database (all universities and academies). In sum, the professors at the University of Molsheim are well documented but not well published, they came from quite far away, and they lived longer than their Protestant counterparts.

Period	nb. obs	birth date	known place	mean age at appoint.	mean age at death	med. dist. birth-univ.	with Wiki.	with Worldcat
1527–1617	3	100 %	100 %	45	65.3	377	33.3 %	100 %
1618–1685	93	97.8%	96.8 %	41	59.4	212	0 %	29 %
1686–1733	166	94.6%	91.6 %	37.7	64.1	190	0.6 %	25.3 %
1734–1800	137	92.7%	89.8 %	36.5	63.2	133	5.1 %	39.4 %
1523–1800	399	94.7%	92.2%	38.2	62.6	179	2.3%	31.6%

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

4 FIELDS

Figure 2 shows the balance between the different fields. Theology and arts dominate. The faculty of arts included both humanities and sciences (mathematics).

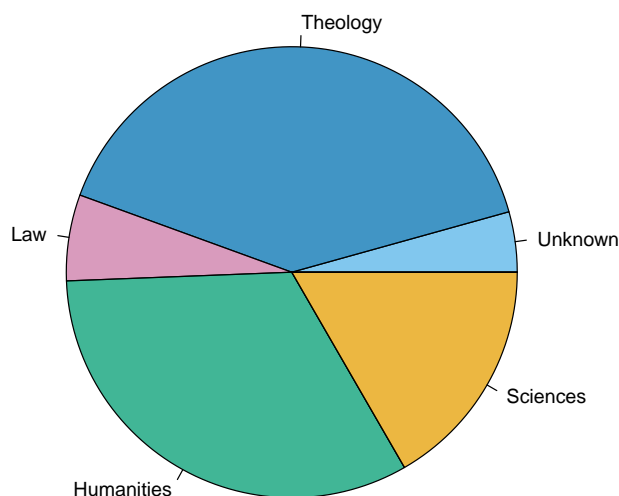


Figure 2: Broad fields at the University of Molsheim (published scholars only)

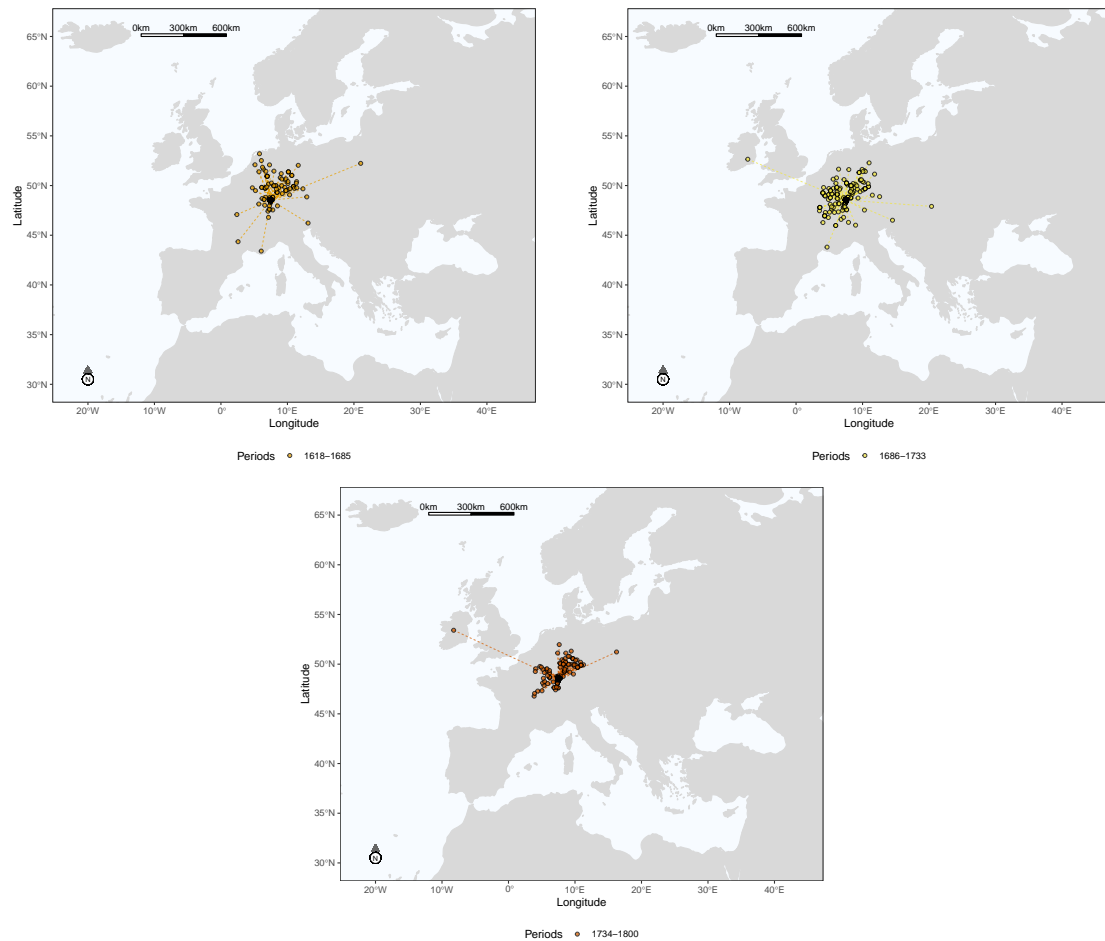


Figure 3: Places of birth of the scholars and literati at the University of Molsheim

5 PLACE OF BIRTH

Figure 3 displays the documented birthplaces of scholars and literati active at the University of Molsheim per period. The pattern is quite stable over time. For the three periods, the professors in Molsheim came from both sides of the linguistic divide (French/German).

6 HUMAN CAPITAL OF SCHOLARS AND LITERATI

For each person in the database, we compute a heuristic human capital index, identified by combining information from Worldcat and Wikipedia using principal component analysis. We also compute the notability of the university at each date by averaging the human capital of the scholars active in Molsheim 25 years before that date. The details are given in RETE in volumes 1–5. Figure 4 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index.

The orange line plots the notability of the University of Molsheim. The aggregated notability remains relatively modest over the period, despite the presence of a few important people, and a reasonable number of publishing scholars. The way Jesuit universities worked might impact our measure of notability: Jesuit professors would not stay in the same place for many years, and would rather accumulate experience at different universities or colleges. This dilutes their contributions in many places. According to our measure, the top 5 scholars were: Schneider, Liebermann, Contzen, Baltus, and Georgel.

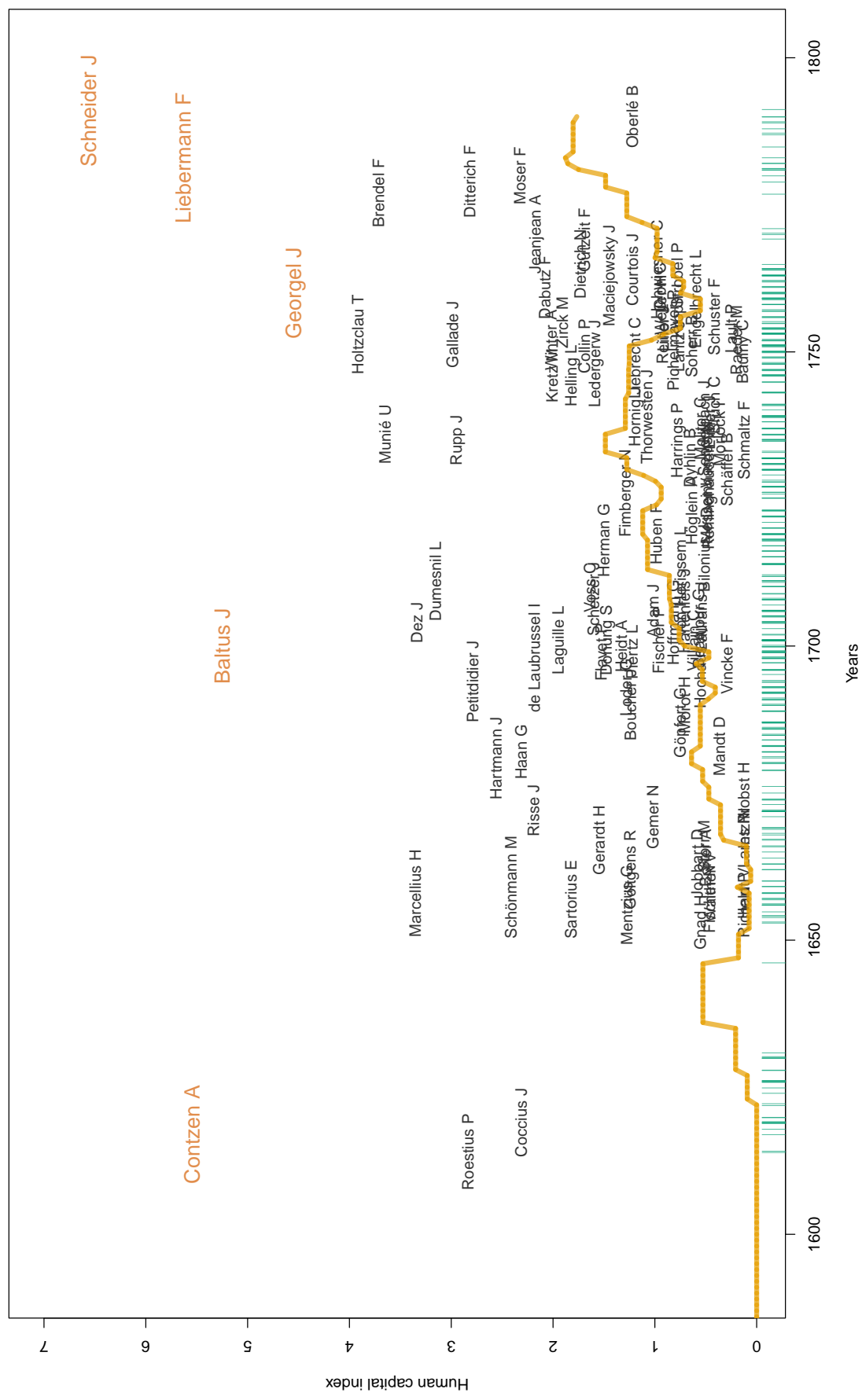


Figure 4: Famous scholars and university notability (orange)

7 TOP 5 PROFESSORS

Johannes Gregorius Schneider (Wipfeld 1756 – Paris 1794), also named Eulogius Schneider, was a Franciscan Priest. He taught at the University of Bonn before being expelled in 1791, after having authored books which aroused massive protest among the clerics of the Cologne Archbishopric, to which the University of Bonn belonged. Schneider went to Strasbourg and took over numerous offices and functions, among which a chair at the Episcopal University. Although an enthusiastic supporter of the French Revolution, Eulogius Schneider was guillotined in Paris in 1794. He published a long list of works, mostly in German.

Franz Leopold Bruno Liebermann (Molsheim 1759 – Strasbourg 1844) was a German Catholic theologian. He taught humanities between 1780 and 1783 at the Episcopal University. During the French Revolution, he was forced to take refuge across the Rhine (1792). He later became a member of the cathedral chapter in Mainz, where he wrote a famous textbook used for years in many theological seminars (Herbermann 1913).

Adam Contzen (Monschau 1571 – Munich 1635) was a German Jesuit. He was a professor at the University of Würzburg from 1606 to 1608, at the University of Mainz from 1610 to 1621, and also taught at the University of Molsheim in 1617. Between 1610 and 1623, Contzen published almost a book a year; these books include not only complicated intellectual discussions concerning the interpretation of scripture, but also political economy treatises with some original theories of the state.

Jean-François Baltus (Metz 1667 – Reims 1743) was a French Jesuit who taught at the universities of Pont-à-Mousson (between 1690 and 1730), Reims (1696), and Molsheim (1700–1712). He left several works of Catholic apologetics, the discipline of defending religious doctrines through systematic argumentation and discourse.

Johannes Franciscus Géorgel (Bruyères (Vosges) 1731 – Bruyères 1813) was a French Jesuit who taught mathematics at the University of Molsheim (from 1567 to 1560) and at other Jesuit colleges. He is particularly known for the six volumes of his memoirs of the French Revolution.

8 UNIVERSITY NETWORK

Here, we assume that when a professor occupied a position in more than one university over their life, this established a link between those universities. The universities with which the University of Molsheim was linked in each period are displayed in Figure 5. Unlike what we found for the University of Strasbourg, there is a clear stability in the pattern of links for the University of Molsheim. Essentially, Jesuit professors moved back and forth between the Jesuit universities of Pont-à-Mousson (De la Croix and Karioun 2021), Bamberg, Würzburg, and Mainz.

9 FINAL THOUGHTS

During the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuit University of Molsheim played a significant role as a hub of Catholic education, alongside the Protestant University of Strasbourg. However, despite their notable contributions, its scholars published fewer works than their Protestant counterparts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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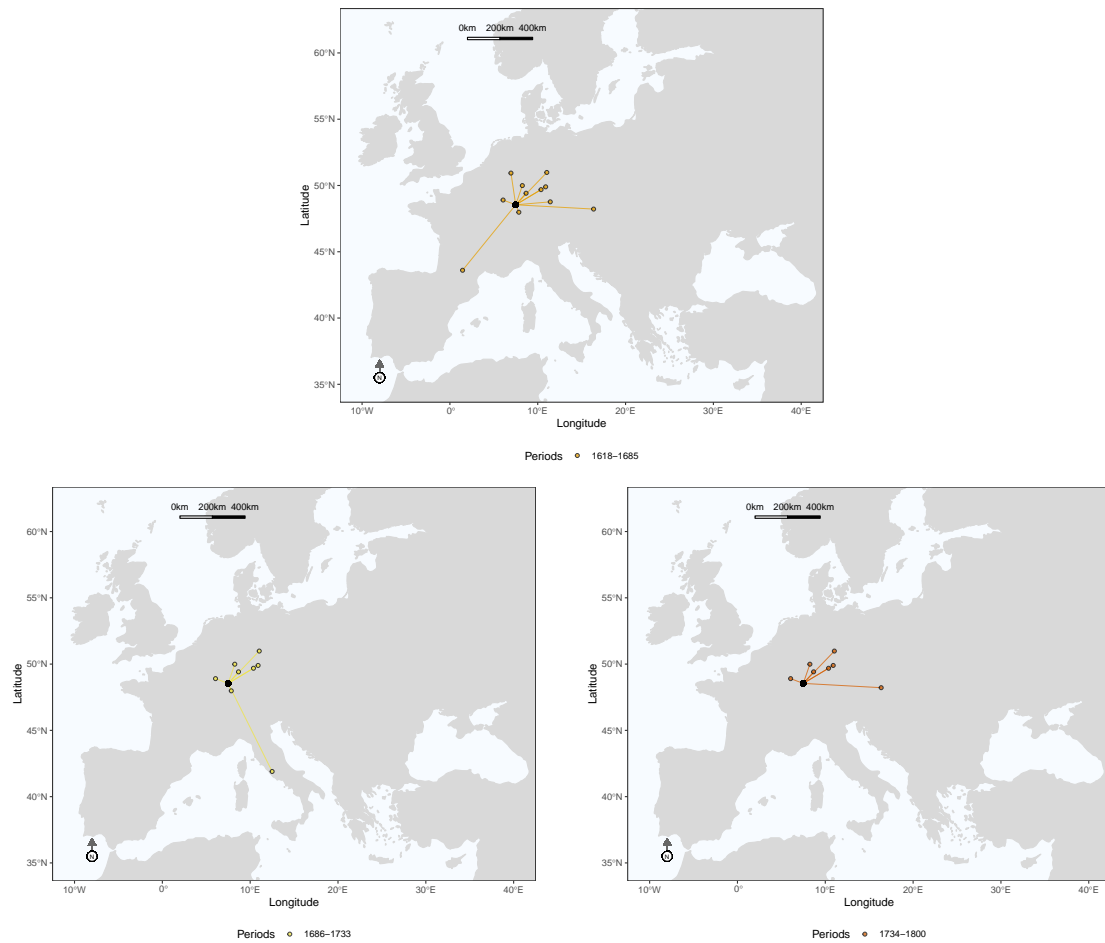


Figure 5: Links between Molsheim and other universities through scholars' mobility, by period

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