

# Scholars and Literati at the University of Uppsala (1477–1800)

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This note is a summary description of the set of scholars and literati who taught at the University of Uppsala from its inception in 1477 to 1800. For more detailed information about these individuals, please visit the comprehensive database available at <https://shiny-lidam.sipr.ucl.ac.be/scholars/>.

## 1 SOURCES

We did not find a comprehensive source cataloguing the professors at the University of Uppsala over the full period. Hence, we combined different sources. The thesis of Jensen (2018) contains a list of professors after 1690. Eenberg (1704) lists professors before 1700. Von Bahr (1945) covers the faculty of medicine. [Astro.uu.se](http://astro.uu.se) (2011) lists the astronomers. In the end, we are confident that the achieved coverage is quite comprehensive. We are probably missing only those who taught but did not achieve the rank of professor (e.g. adjuncts, docents: see De la Croix (2021) for an example were they are covered).

## 2 THE UNIVERSITY

Uppsala University was established in 1477 by the Catholic Church, under a papal bull issued by Pope Sixtus IV. Archbishop Jakob Ulfvsson of Uppsala was instrumental in its creation, aiming to provide education for clergy and administrators. The preexisting Uppsala Cathedral School was seen as a feeder institution to the university, with many of the early students and faculty coming from its ranks.

The early curriculum followed the medieval model with faculties of theology, law, medicine, and philosophy, with the main focus being theology, Latin, and scholasticism. The university was closely tied to the Church, which provided funding and influenced its governance.

The Protestant Reformation in Sweden, initiated by King Gustav Vasa in the 1520s, significantly impacted Uppsala University. As the Catholic Church's influence waned, so did its financial and intellectual support for the institution. During this period, the university experienced a near collapse, as resources were diverted and there was a general decline in student enrollment and academic activity.

The Uppsala Synod of 1593, led by Archbishop Abraham Angermannus, reaffirmed Sweden's adherence to Lutheranism and played a crucial role in reviving Uppsala University. The university's governance and mission were redefined under the new Protestant ethos.

King Gustavus Adolphus (Gustav II Adolf) was a pivotal figure in the university's resurgence. In 1624, he endowed the university with lands and revenue, securing its financial stability. He also encouraged the expansion of the curriculum to include law, medicine, and the humanities. The 17th century saw the establishment of new chairs in mathematics, astronomy, and other fields. This period also saw the construction of new university buildings, including the Gustavianum (1620s), which became the main academic building.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Uppsala University gained international recognition for its contributions to the natural sciences. This period marked a shift towards empirical studies and research, contributing to the European Enlightenment. Uppsala also continued to be a prominent centre for Lutheran theology and moral philosophy.

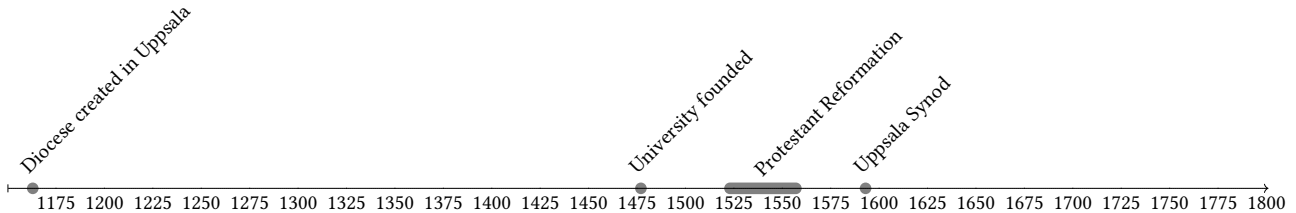


Figure 1: Timeline of the University of Uppsala

Period	nb. obs	birth date	known place	mean age at appoint.	mean age at death	med. dist. birth-univ.	with Wiki.	with Worldcat
1348–1449	1	100	100	42	64	63	100	100
1450–1526	11	36.4	36.4	43	76	0	18.2	36.4
1527–1617	41	61	70.7	32.3	62.2	171	82.9	63.4
1618–1685	108	95.4	87	34.9	59.4	170	89.8	88
1686–1733	52	92.3	86.5	39.8	64.4	95	86.5	96.2
1734–1800	88	93.2	83	39.4	68.3	180	83	90.9
1200–1800	301	87.4	81.7	37.1	63.6	154	83.7	85

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

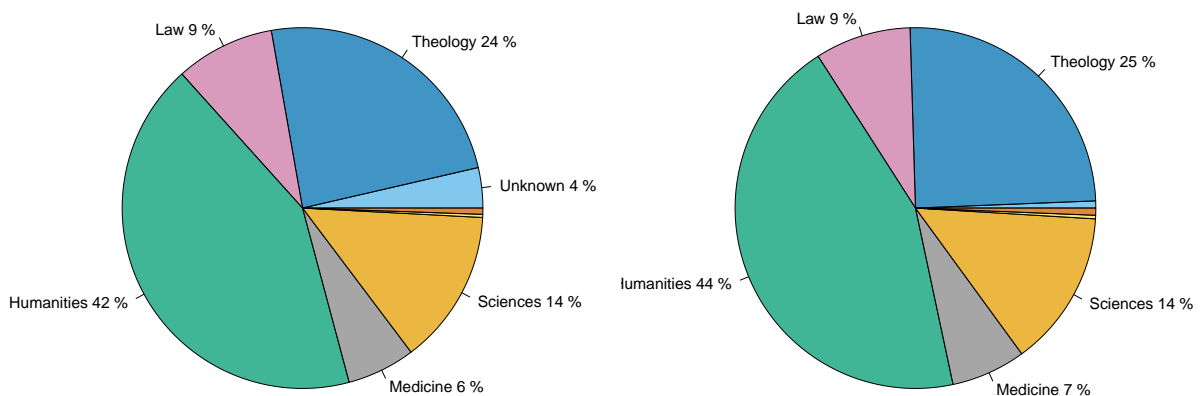


Figure 2: Broad fields at the University of Uppsala (left: all scholars, right: published scholars only)

### 3 SOME STATISTICS

The dataset includes information on scholars and in Table 1 we present a summary of descriptive statistics for the scholars. The first line of the Table shows that we incorporate at least one person who taught before the official creation of the university. In the second period, the proportion of scholars for whom we know year and place of birth is quite low. Consequently, the other measures

for this period are calculated from a very small sample size and may not be representative. For the last three periods, on the contrary, we know very well the vital dates and places of birth of the scholars. On the whole, the percentage of scholars with Wikipedia pages and/or VIAF records is very high compared to the average in the full database (roughly, 1/4 have a Wikipedia page, 35% a VIAF page). Finally, it is noteworthy that the median distance from scholars' birthplaces to the university is relatively low, especially considering Sweden's size. This suggests that professor recruitment was predominantly local.

## 4 FIELDS

Figure 2 illustrates the fields of specialization among scholars at the University of Uppsala. Humanities is the predominant field, with a strong dose of theology. Sciences and Medicine appear relatively strong as well, while law has a minimal presence. There is not much difference between the two pie charts (all on the left, published only on the right), as most scholars were published, according to VIAF.

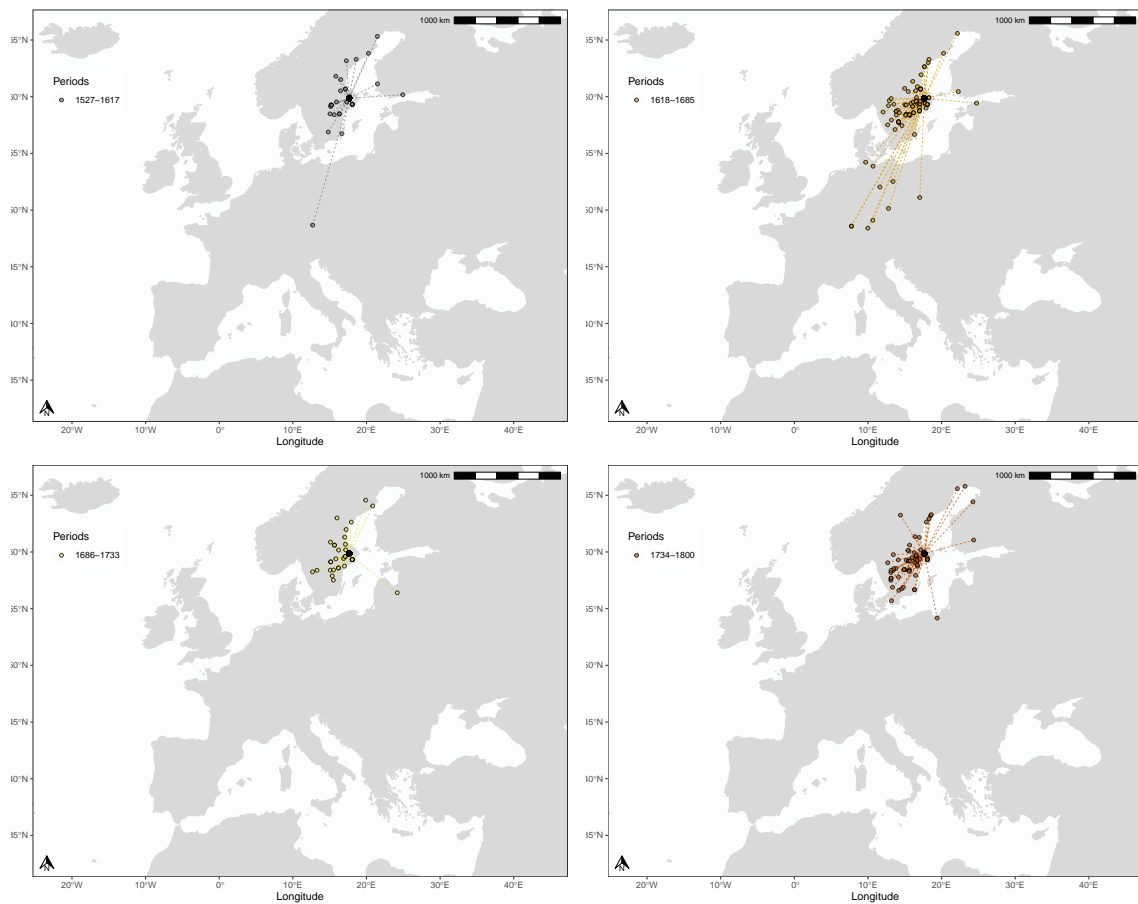


Figure 3: Places of birth of the scholars and literati at the University of Uppsala

## 5 PLACE OF BIRTH

Figure 3 depicts the birthplaces of scholars affiliated with the University of Uppsala across different periods. This visualization highlights the geographical origins of the professors over time, illustrating the documented low median distance from birthplaces to Uppsala. During all periods but one, the professors originate from Scandinavia (mainly Sweden and Finland), with very few exceptions. Only in the period 1618–1685 we see several scholars coming from the Holy Roman Empire to teach in Uppsala.

## 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. Based on the individual notability of scholars and literati, we compute the notability of the university at each date  $t$  by averaging the human capital of the scholars who were active at the University of Uppsala within a 25-year time frame leading up to  $t$ , and who concluded their careers before  $t$ . The details are given in Curtis and De la Croix (2023) and in De la Croix et al. (2024).

Figure 4 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index. The orange line displays the notability of the university, based on how well-published its top scholars were. The evolution of notability follows well the narrative in Section 2. After a modest start during the Catholic period, the university (number of scholars and notability) collapses between 1550 and 1590. After 1590, we observe a sustained rise in notability, driven by a large number of very good scholars.

## 7 TOP 5 PROFESSORS

We now provide a brief overview of the five professors with the highest human capital index.

**Carl Linnaeus** (Råshult 1707 – Uppsala 1770) revolutionized the biological sciences with his work on taxonomy, based on a binomial nomenclature system for naming species, and the classification of plants and animals. He held the chair of medicine and botany from 1741, attracting students from across Europe. Linnaeus' work led to the creation of Uppsala's famous Botanical Garden and his students embarked on botanical expeditions worldwide, enhancing the university's global scientific network. Under Linnaeus and his students, Uppsala University gained an international reputation, particularly in natural history and medicine.

**Olaus Magnus** (Linköping 1490 – Rome 1557) was a Swedish writer, historian, and cartographer, best known for his detailed map, *Carta Marina*, and his monumental work, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (History of the Northern Peoples), which provided a rich account of the culture, folklore, and geography of Scandinavia. Olaus was a Catholic priest, and after the Reformation, spent much of his life in exile in Rome due to Sweden's shift to Lutheranism. According to Eenberg (1704), Olaus was professor in Uppsala, but this is not confirmed by other sources.

**Carl Peter Thunberg** (Jonköping 1743 – Uppsala 1828) was a Swedish naturalist, botanist, and physician, and one of the most prominent disciples of Carl Linnaeus. He studied medicine and natural sciences at Uppsala University, where he was taught by Linnaeus. Under Linnaeus' influence, Thunberg developed a deep interest in botany and became one of his most successful pupils. Thunberg traveled extensively, especially to Japan, South Africa, and Southeast Asia, documenting numerous plant species previously unknown to European science. His most famous work is *Flora Japonica* (1784), the first extensive Western account of Japanese flora. Upon returning to Sweden, Thunberg became a professor of medicine and botany at Uppsala University, continuing Linnaeus' legacy by teaching and classifying thousands of plant species.

**Anders Celsius** (Uppsala 1701 – Uppsala 1744) was a Swedish astronomer, physicist, and mathematician, best known for creating the Celsius temperature scale. He was deeply connected to Uppsala University, where he studied and later became a professor of astronomy in 1730. Celsius came from an academic family; both his father and grandfather were professors at the same university. Celsius founded the Uppsala Astronomical Observatory, one of Sweden's first modern research facilities for astronomical studies. Celsius also conducted groundbreaking research on the shape of the Earth, participating in an expedition to Lapland to measure a degree of latitude, which contributed to understanding the Earth's flattening at the poles.

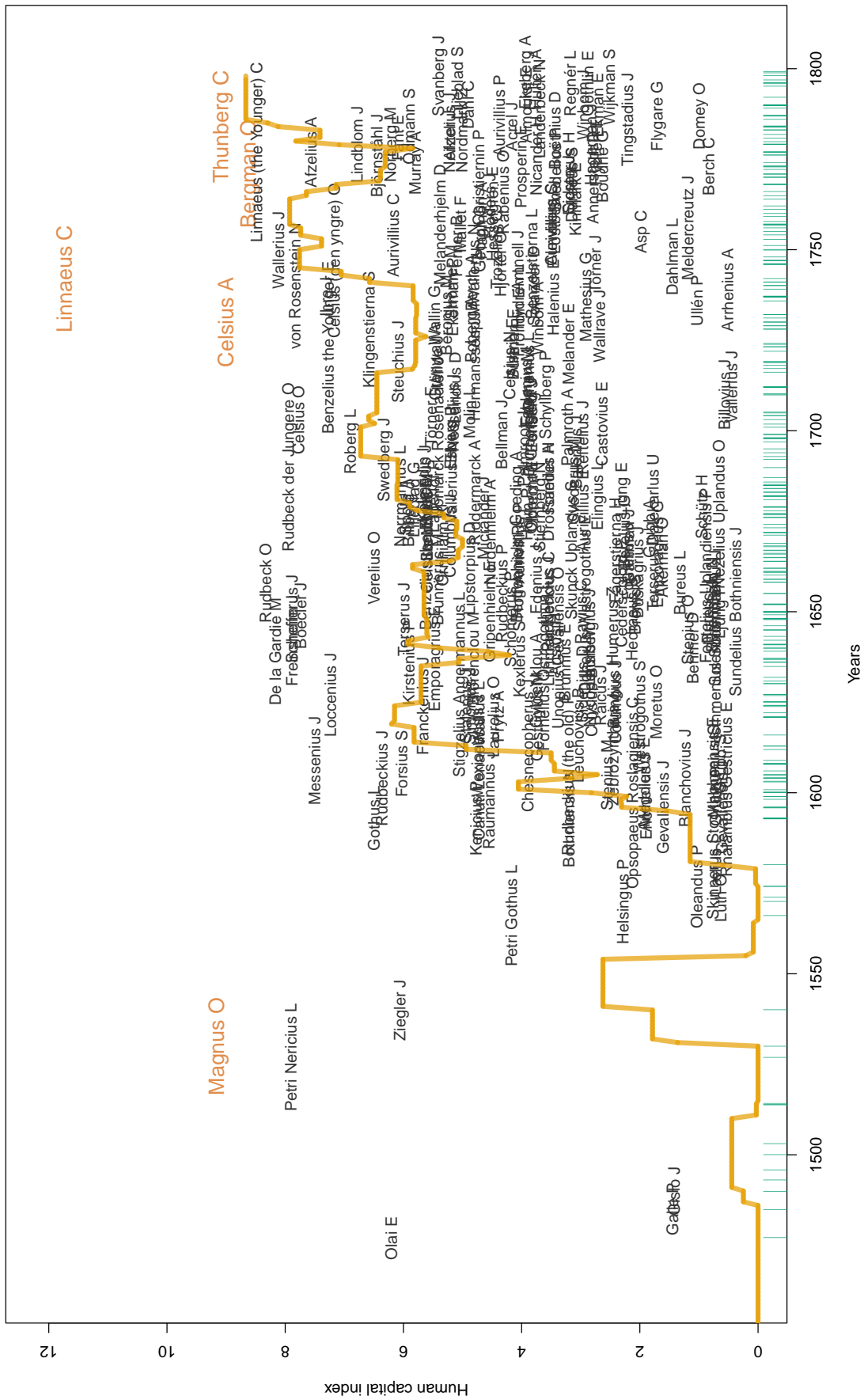


Figure 4: Famous scholars and university notability (orange)

In 1742, Celsius proposed his famous temperature scale, which originally set 0°C as the boiling point of water and 100°C as the freezing point. This scale was later reversed after his death, becoming the Celsius scale we use today.

**Torbern Olaf Bergman** (Låstad 1735 – Medevi 1784) was a Swedish chemist and mineralogist, renowned for his pioneering work in analytical chemistry and for advancing the understanding of chemical affinity. Bergman too had a deep connection with Uppsala University, where he studied mathematics and natural sciences and later became a professor of chemistry and natural philosophy in 1767. Bergman made significant contributions to chemistry, particularly in the analysis of mineral compounds and chemical reactions. His most influential work was *Disquisitio de Attractionibus Electivis* (1775), which provided a comprehensive table of chemical affinities, helping to advance the understanding of how different substances react with one another.

## 8 WHO'S WHO ON THE MOON

There are various indicators of an individual's notable achievements, such as the recognition they receive through the naming of streets, schools, research institutes, prizes, and even lunar craters. When it comes to scholars from the University of Uppsala, three have had a lunar crater named after them, indicating a high level of recognition in this regard. They were already described in the previous section: Carl Linnaeus, Anders Celsius, and Torbern Olaf Bergman.

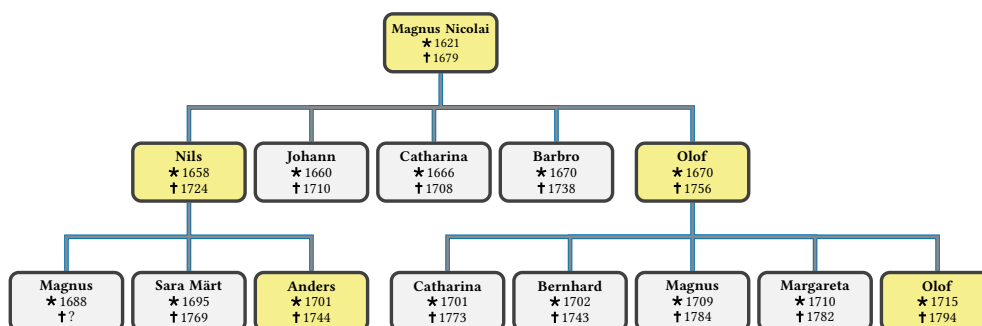


Figure 5: The Celsius family. Professors at Uppsala in yellow squares

## 9 FAMILIES OF SCHOLARS

We counted about two thousand father-son pairs in the full database (De la Croix and Goñi 2024), 20 being related to the University of Uppsala. This is a large number.

Figure 5 shows some parts of the genealogical tree of the Celsius family (data from [www.geni.com](http://www.geni.com)), and highlights those who taught at Uppsala. The hero of the family is Anders, described above.

## 10 UNIVERSITY NETWORK

We assume that when a professor held positions at multiple universities during their career, it established a connection between those institutions. Figure 6 displays the universities that were linked to Uppsala during the various periods. It is surprising to see relatively few universities connected. It reflects the fact that Uppsala's scholars did not move much, and the University did not hire much from abroad, despite being of high quality during most of its existence.

## 11 INTERSECTIONS WITH NEARBY ACADEMY

The Royal Society of Sciences in Uppsala (*Societatis Regiae Scientiarum Upsaliensis* in Latin, its official language) was founded in 1710, making it the oldest scientific academy in Sweden. It was initiated

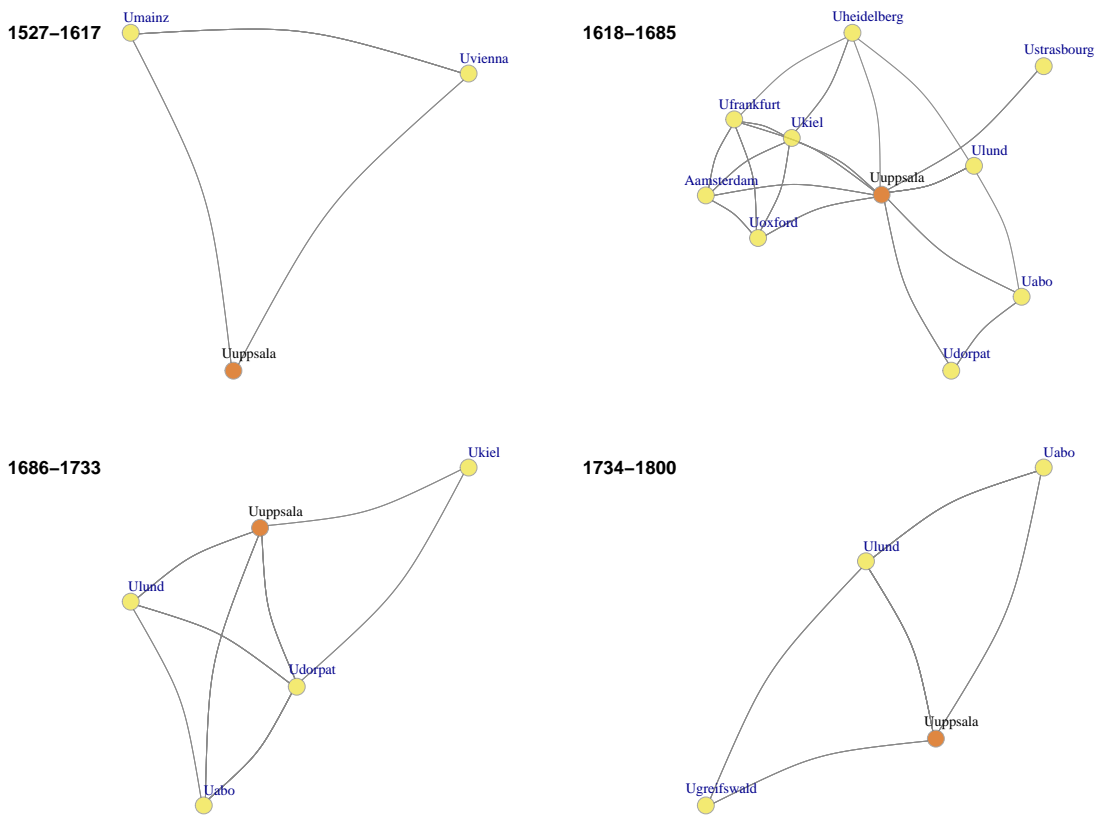


Figure 6: Links between Uppsala and other universities through scholars' mobility

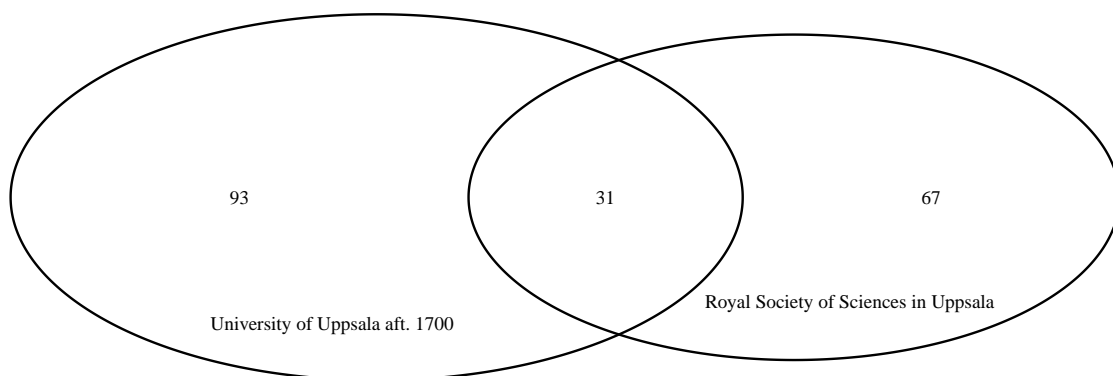


Figure 7: Intersections of the lists of scholars between the University and the Academy of Uppsala

by Erik Benzelius the Younger, a scholar, clergyman, and later Archbishop of Uppsala. He had studied in Europe and wanted to establish an institution that would foster scientific discussions and publications, similar to the scientific societies in England and France. I did not find a source with the list of members of the Royal Society of Sciences at Uppsala. There is however a catalogue of publications (Karlberg 1977) from which we can establish a list of authors. Assuming the authors were members of the Society, we looked at the intersection between the Society and the University.

Figure 7 shows the results. 32% of the academicians were also professors (31/98). This is a remarkable pattern, as, academies were often unrelated to local universities. Another exception was Montpellier, where 34% of the academicians were also at the university (see De la Croix (2020)). Uppsala and Montpellier thus share a similar integration between the academy and the university.

## 12 FINAL THOUGHTS

By 1800, Uppsala University had transformed from a small Catholic institution into a leading center of Lutheran theology, Enlightenment philosophy, and natural sciences. Although the mobility of its scholars was low, its influence extended well beyond Sweden, and it had established itself as one of the foremost universities in Europe.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Homepage: <https://perso.uclouvain.be/david.delacroix/uthc.html>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UTHCerc>

Database: <https://shiny-lidam.sipr.ucl.ac.be/scholars/>

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