RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

THE RENAISSANCE LINGUISTICS ARCHIVE

THE **RENAISSANCE LINGUISTICS ARCHIVE** is a bibliographical project which collects secondary sources (published after 1870) pertaining to linguistic ideas in Renaissance Europe. Since its foundation in 1986 scientists from all over Europe have contributed to its growth. Among all the contributors we remember best Mr. H.U. Loewenthal, who died in 1996 – he is the person that has to be thanked first of all for the big number of scrutinies which he carried out under the supervision of Professor John Flood. In its beginning the bibliographical project was the fruit of the *Istituto di Studi Rinascimentali* at Ferrara. In 1994 it was transferred by Mirko Tavoni from the University of Pisa to Gerda Haßler at the *Institut für Romanistik* of Potsdam University. Since that time the number of contributors has increased and beside the voluntary work of scholars who have made a spontaneous data collection according to their individual research interests, we began to explore a number of periodicals systematically. However, in spite of this two-way approach, cases where bibliographical items have overlapped have to date been rare. This shows that a lot of work remains to be done. With this aim in mind, the project was incorporated into the World Wide Web (http://www.uni-potsdam. de/u/romanistik/rla) in 1996 to publicise it and to allow free access for the insertion of new material for bibliographical research.

It is the aim of the project to meet the need for an international and interdisciplinary exchange of bibliographical information and to overcome the separation between the different national traditions in the study of Renaissance linguistics, which has been an obstacle to the understanding of the actual historical processes at work and to the necessary European dimension of research on Renaissance linguistic thought. These objectives led to the choice of the time span from 1350 to 1700, including the different periods which are related to the notion of 'Renaissance' in the various national traditions. This allows the barriers between scientists working on different national languages to be surmounted, permits access to information about the expansion of a given phenomenon within the whole of Europe at a given time. Such a comparative approach takes into consideration the genarl collaboration of scholars during the Renaissance period which was much stronger between the European countries then, it would seem, than is known today. From this perspective, the bibliography includes all the literature dealing with linguistic knowledge during the period indicated, that is to say, everything which has been produced on the subject of general theories of language, descriptions of different languages, the relationships between languages, analyses of languages, and so on. Here it should be mentioned that the specific character of the project consists in its metalinguistic subject matter. This means that works must not be included which deal with language changes that took place during the Renaissance period, but only works which deal with descriptions of languages or linguistic theories at this time.

The basis of the bibliography is the voluntary work of all those working in the described field of research. This procedure has not caused a lot of overlapping until today. There is still much data to be gathered, particularly for the period from 1870 to 1930, which represents only 15% of the bibliography as a whole. As regards the distribution of the bibliographical items as relating to particular national languages, the poor coverage of the English and the Slavonic languages is an issue that will need to be addressed.

Besides the necessary bibliographical details for each item, information is also given about the contents of the article or monograph in question. This description is divided into five fields. Under the headline *subject-authors* one can find the names of Renaissance 'linguists' (grammarians, men of letters, logicians, translators, theoreticians of various kinds in the linguistic field) and also of those who instigated interventions in the practical realities languages (for example those responsable for a the effects of various policies of language planning), together with variants of the names and life-dates for each individual.. The number of subject-authors is limited to twelve. A second field provides information about a *specific date* or *limiting dates* during the Renaissance when the phenomenon described took place. The field *key-terms,* with a maximum of five entries, defines the areas of linguistics dealt with in the article. For these purposes a list of about 420 key-terms is proposed, which may subsequently be enlarged. These terms must always be used in a metalinguistic sense for describing Renaissance theories of linguistics. A further field indicates the local or extended *geographical area* where the production and diffusion of particular linguistic ideas and the relevant texts took place. A list of countries, regions and cities has been established, which is likewise open to additions. In the fifth field the *languages or dialects* treated by the Renaissance thinkers are listed.

Since the publication of the third print-out in 1990, some 1,300 new entries have been collected, and this figure continues to grow. In order to allow all those iworking in this field to participate in the project, a new printed edition of the complete bibliography will be published during the next year. To facilitate research, we also intend to present the whole data-base in machine-readable form on CD-ROM. For this project to taken forward and further enlarged, the undertaking stands in need of support and collaboration of scholars on all sides. If you wish to contact us, you can send a message to the WWW address given above or to:

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