

## UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CORRESPONDENCE NETWORK: THE CASE OF BASEL, CA. 1500–1550

AMY NELSON BURNETT

This essay presents a prosopographical analysis of the social network revealed by the surviving correspondence of two dozen humanists and reformers in southern Germany and Switzerland between 1510 and 1555. Over half of the members of this correspondence network obtained a master's degree or higher, placing them among Germany's learned elite. As students, these men formed connections with future colleagues, employers, and patrons, and so their decisions about where to study were significant. The largest number of future network members matriculated in Basel's university, although it was the smallest university in German-speaking Europe. Many Basel students also studied at one of the other universities in southern Germany or continued their studies in France or Italy. Basel's small size and the mobility of its students were two factors that encouraged network formation. The university of Basel attracted students through the early sixteenth century, but it was particularly important for the generation born after 1510 as one of the few places where Protestants could obtain a degree. Basel's influence was largely limited to south Germany and Switzerland, but it played a role in shaping the learned elite of this region that was analogous to that of Wittenberg in central and northern Germany.

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Over the last few decades there has been growing interest among historians in analyzing social networks in early modern Europe.<sup>1</sup> Theorists have pointed to the significance of social networks for the spread of news and information, the exchange of goods and services, and the shaping of opinions, values, and identities. In the hierarchical society of the early modern period, networks were also vital for enabling brokerage or mediation between individuals and groups. To cite only two influential early examples, historians have used social network analysis to shed light on Cosimo de' Medici's rise to power and to link changes in the social structure of the English gentry with the growth of religious factionalism and the outbreak of civil war.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of social network analysis, see Stephen P. BORGATTI – Virginie LOPEZ-KIDWELL, *Network Theory*, in: John Scott – Peter J. Carrington (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Network Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA 2014, pp. 40–54; on the application of social network analysis to the past, Claire LEMERCIER, *Formal Network Methods in History: Why and How?*, in: Georg Fertig (ed.), *Social Networks, Political Institutions, and Rural Societies*, Turnhout 2015, pp. 281–310.

<sup>2</sup> John F. PADGETT – Christopher K. ANSELL, *Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400–1434*, *American Journal of Sociology* 98, 1993, pp. 1259–1319; Peter S. BEARMAN, *Relations into Rhetorics: Local Elite Social Structure in England, 1540–1640*, New Brunswick 1993.

In a seminal article first published in 1979, Wolfgang Reinhard identified four types of personal relationships important for early modern network formation: kinship, regional origin (*Landsmannschaft*), friendship, and patronage.<sup>3</sup> Correspondence networks provide one way to look at all four types of relationships identified by Reinhard, for letters were written to family, to compatriots, to friends, and to patrons.<sup>4</sup> The prosopographical analysis of members of a correspondence network is only the first step towards understanding the network linking them. It is a necessary step, however, for it allows us to identify group characteristics and shared experiences that are otherwise hidden from view.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Germany's learned elite, one of those shared experiences was university study, during which time students developed relationships with others, whether fellow students, teachers, or potential patrons, who could benefit their future careers.

The importance of common university experience for networking practices can be seen quite clearly in the correspondence network that connected humanists and reformers in the first half of the sixteenth century. Where other essays in this issue have looked at different groups of students in Basel, this essay examines members of a correspondence network to demonstrate Basel's importance for the educated elite of Upper Germany and Switzerland.<sup>6</sup> It is based on a database of biographical information concerning the men who corresponded with two dozen prominent intellectual figures active in German-speaking lands between 1510 and 1555.<sup>7</sup> The database's geographical focus is south Germany and Switzerland, and especially the cities of Basel, Zurich, and Strasbourg, but for the sake of comparison it also includes the Erfurt humanist circle and the Wittenberg reformers.<sup>8</sup> Examining the university education of members of this correspondence network allows comparison of Basel with

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang REINHARD, *Freunde und Kreaturen. "Verflechtung" als Konzept zur Erforschung historischer Führungsgruppen*, in: Wolfgang Reinhard, *Ausgewählte Abhandlungen*, Berlin 1997, pp. 289–310.

<sup>4</sup> Regina DAUSER, *Informationskultur und Beziehungswissen: das Korrespondenznetz Hans Fuggers (1531–1598)*, Tübingen 2008, pp. 3–10, 40–55.

<sup>5</sup> An example of this approach in Christine TREML, *Humanistische Gemeinschaftsbildung: sozio-kulturelle Untersuchung zur Entstehung eines neuen Gelehrtenstandes in der frühen Neuzeit*, Hildesheim 1989, pp. 15–40.

<sup>6</sup> The correspondence network was identified using the published letters and correspondence lists of the following German and Swiss humanists active in 1510 and after: Jakob Wimpfeling (Upper Rhine), Johannes Reuchlin (Stuttgart), Conrad Mutian (Gotha), Joachim Vadian (Vienna/St. Gallen), Veit Bild and Konrad Peutinger (Augsburg), Christoph Scheurl and Willibald Pirckheimer (Nuremberg), the Benedictine monk Nikolaus Ellenbog (Ottobeuren), the Ravensburg humanist Michael Hummelberg, the Strasbourg jurist Nikolaus Gerbel, the Amerbach family and Beatus Rhenanus (centered in Basel), and Erasmus's correspondence with individuals from German-speaking areas. It also includes the reformers Huldrych Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, Konrad Pellikan, Theobald Billikan, Johannes Oecolampadius, Oswald Myconius, Wolfgang Capito, Martin Bucer, Johannes Zwick, and Ambrosius and Thomas Blarer, as well as part of the correspondence of the Wittenberg reformers Martin Luther, Philipp Melancthon, Georg Spalatin, and Andreas Karlstadt.

<sup>7</sup> At present the biographical database contains over 2800 individuals (including 102 women) and 227 groups. Information concerning these correspondents was assembled from annotations in the edited correspondence as well as companion volumes such as Heinz SCHEIBLE et al. (eds.), *Melancthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, Ser. 1, vol. 12–17: *Personen*, Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 1977–; from printed biographical reference works, especially Peter BIETENHOLZ (ed.), *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, I–III, Toronto 1985–1987; from on-line biographical resources such as the Deutsche Biographie, <<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de>>, Frühneuzeitliche Ärztebriefe, <<https://www.medizingeschichte.uni-wuerzburg.de/akademie/index.html>>, and the Repertorium Academicum Germanicum (RAG), <<https://rag-online.org/>>; and from published university matriculation records, especially Hans Georg WACKERNAGEL (ed.), *Die Matrikel der Universität Basel*, I–II, Basel 1951–1956.

<sup>8</sup> Unlike the correspondence of humanists and reformers in central and south Germany and Switzerland, there are no published editions of correspondence of humanists who were active in either the lower Rhineland or northern Germany, and so those areas are not well represented in the database.

other universities, and it demonstrates that Basel's place within the southern component of this network was completely disproportionate to its size.

## University Education and the Swiss/South German Correspondence Network

Personal acquaintance was an essential feature of correspondence networks. With only a few exceptions, letter-writers did not address individuals they had never met. University study was therefore valuable not only for the knowledge and skills students gained but also for the opportunity to meet others who might become members of an individual's personal network. Some basic features of university life at the turn of the sixteenth century explain why university attendance was so important for the formation of correspondence networks. Most teachers on the arts faculty supported themselves by taking students into their household, who then became part of their teacher's *familia*.<sup>9</sup> At many universities, arts students (who were usually in their mid-teens) were required to live in colleges supervised by a *magister*, who was often at the same time a student in one of the higher faculties.<sup>10</sup> Because the arts masters were usually no more than ten or fifteen years older than their youngest students, they were ideally placed to function as mentors, and the relationship between student and teacher was often the foundation for later correspondence. Contact with other students, and especially fellow members of a teacher's family, also promoted friendships that continued after the students left the university. One can see these factors at work in the letters exchanged within and between the circles established around Heinrich Glarean in Basel (and then Paris), Ulrich Zasius in Freiburg, and Joachim Vadian in Vienna during the second decade of the sixteenth century. As students in the arts faculty, both Bruno and Bonifacius Amerbach taught Greek to fellow students in Basel, and Philipp Melanchthon taught a similar circle of students in Tübingen, and they later corresponded, at least briefly, with their former students.

Participation in a humanist correspondence network was one way to draw the attention of potential patrons and employers, and so students were eager to display their command of humanist epistolography in letters to both teachers and friends. This means that humanist correspondence through the first few decades of the sixteenth century tended to be a "young man's game", played to gain recognition, status, and employment. Once they had found a satisfactory position, their participation in the humanist correspondence network reflected their new responsibilities. To give one important example, Joachim Vadian's correspondence network changed completely after he left Vienna and returned home to St. Gallen. Religious differences also shaped the correspondence network. After 1524, both Heinrich Glarean and Ulrich Zasius broke ties with friends and former students who became Protestant reformers.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, bonds formed between students could be both useful

<sup>9</sup> Rainer Christoph SCHWINGES, *Admission*, in: Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe*, I, Universities in the Middle Ages, Cambridge 1992, pp. 171–179.

<sup>10</sup> For the example of Tübingen, see Sönke LORENZ, *Einleitung. Zwischen Regenz- und Ordinarien-Fakultät*, in: Miriam Eberlein – Stefan Lang (eds.), *Tübinger Professorenkatalog*, I/1, Die Matrikel der Magister und Bakkalare der Artistenfakultät (1477–1535), Ostfildern 2006, pp. 15–24.

<sup>11</sup> Glarean's early correspondents included both Ulrich Zwingli and Oswald Myconius. Zasius rebuffed the efforts of his former student Thomas Blarer to win him to the Protestant side; cf. his letter of 12 Dec 1531, in Bernd

and long lasting, as attested by the correspondence between the Constance Bürgermeister Thomas Blarer and the Basel jurist Bonifacius Amerbach, which continued for over four decades. Many of Blarer's letters were commendations for young men from Constance who were going to Basel to study, but Blarer also passed on news and discussed current events with Amerbach. Amerbach in turn provided legal advice and brokered the sale of valuable objects for Blarer.<sup>12</sup> The survival of both sides of this correspondence may be unusual, but the friendship between the two former students was not.

Amerbach, Blarer, Glarean, Vadian, and Zasius were all active members of a larger correspondence network that linked university towns, major printing centers, imperial cities, and rural parishes through the first half of the sixteenth century. In the early sixteenth century, this large correspondence network contained several distinct regional components, with centers around the universities of Wittenberg, Erfurt, and Leipzig in central Germany, Vienna in Habsburg Austria, Cologne and Louvain in the Rhineland and into the southern Netherlands, and a larger network across South Germany and Switzerland.<sup>13</sup> This last network consisted of two interconnected segments. One of these extended along the Upper Rhine in a broad swath from Heidelberg to Basel and Constance, including Alsace and northern Switzerland, and the other stretched from the Rhine eastward to the cities of Augsburg and Ingolstadt.<sup>14</sup> Originating with humanist circles around Jakob Wimpfeling and Johannes Reuchlin at the turn of the century, this southern network developed significantly after Erasmus's arrival in Basel in 1514, and several of its younger members would become prominent Protestant reformers.

The regional nature of these components of the larger correspondence network reflects the difficulty of delivering letters over long distances. While letters could be entrusted to students and merchants, or to printers traveling to the semi-annual book fairs in Frankfurt and Leipzig, regular correspondence was easiest with those closer to home. The regional differences were also exacerbated by the religious disagreements generated by the Reformation. The network components centered in the Rhineland and Vienna remained loyal to Rome, while the central and south German components endorsed evangelical teachings but divided over the understanding of the Lord's Supper. Despite these disagreements, a small group of individuals from each component functioned as bridges by corresponding with members of other components.<sup>15</sup> These men included the most highly educated and influential members of the correspondence network.

MOELLER, *Nachträge zum Blarer-Briefwechsel 1523–1548: zum Todestag von Ambrosius Blarer am 6. Dezember 1964*, *Blätter für württembergische Kirchengeschichte* 64, 1964, pp. 3–52, at pp. 32–33.

<sup>12</sup> Blarer and Amerbach knew each other from their student days in Freiburg; their letters in Alfred HARTMANN – Beat Rudolf JENNY (eds.), *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, 11 vols., Basel 1942–2010 (hereafter AK): Blarer's reference to their student days in Freiburg, 17 Aug. 1545, AK 6:177–8, no. 2744; Blarer's thanks for Amerbach's advice for his aunt, 28 Mar 1552, AK 8:192–3, no. 3513; correspondence concerning a golden drinking cup and rings from 1555 *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> The humanist circles in central Germany, Vienna, and Switzerland/the German southwest are described in Amy Nelson BURNETT, *Revisiting Humanism and the Urban Reformation*, *Lutheran Quarterly* 35, 2021, pp. 373–400. Because the correspondence of humanists active in the Rhineland and southern Netherlands is largely unpublished, it is more difficult to describe, but its existence can be inferred by humanist publications produced by individuals in this region.

<sup>14</sup> The imperial city of Nuremberg was more closely connected to the central German rather than the southern network; its students studied more frequently in Leipzig, Ingolstadt, or Wittenberg than at the universities of the southwest.

<sup>15</sup> On the significance of bridges or “weak ties,” Mark S. GRANOVETTER, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, *American Journal of Sociology* 78, 1973, pp. 1360–1380.

The importance of Basel's university emerges most clearly from an examination of the southern component of this larger network. For this analysis, I examine the 867 members of the Swiss and south German correspondence network who matriculated in at least one university and came from German-speaking Europe, the Habsburg-ruled territories in the Netherlands and central Europe, or from areas further to the east or southeast. The southern network also included a number of French, Italians, British, and Iberians, but most of these men were either passive participants in the network (e.g., recipients of printed dedication letters) or came to Switzerland or the Empire on diplomatic missions or as refugees long after completing their studies. They therefore had no connection to any German university and so have been excluded from this study.

The 867 men who matriculated at a German university comprise not quite half of the 1806 male participants in the southern correspondence network. I assume that an even larger percentage of the network had some university education, but I have restricted my examination to those for whom I have matriculation dates, which locates these individuals in a specific place at a specific time.<sup>16</sup> Most of these individuals corresponded only with other members of the southern network, but 20% also corresponded with someone within the central German network.<sup>17</sup>

The majority of southern network members came from the Holy Roman Empire, and especially from its southwestern corner (**Figure 1** in the Illustration section II). One third of these men were born in the present state of Baden-Württemberg and 12% came from Alsace. Another 21% of this group stemmed from the present state of Bavaria, including the former imperial cities of Augsburg and Nuremberg.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, only a handful of correspondents came from northern or eastern Germany, and 60% of these belonged to the small group that corresponded with both the central and the southern component.

The Swiss were the second largest group within the southern correspondence network. Two-thirds of them came from the major cities and associated territories in the north and west of the Swiss Confederation, areas that adopted Protestantism.<sup>19</sup> Only 8% of the network members came from east-central or southeastern Europe, and over half of these came from the Habsburg Austrian lands.<sup>20</sup> Last but not least, a small number of individuals born in the Low Countries participated in the southern correspondence network.

As **Figure 2** shows, these 867 men truly were a learned elite. At a time when half the students who matriculated at a university left without obtaining any degree and perhaps another 30% received only a bachelor's degree, fully one-third of the men in the southern

<sup>16</sup> In a few cases I have substituted other information for matriculation dates, for instance when an individual's matriculation states that he had obtained a degree elsewhere.

<sup>17</sup> Of the 867 men in the southern component, 698 corresponded only within this network and 169 also corresponded with a member of the central German network.

<sup>18</sup> The use of present-day boundaries is of course anachronistic, but my purpose is to allow modern readers to envision distances on a map rather than to say anything about the regional or political identity of students in the sixteenth century.

<sup>19</sup> The correspondence of Zwingli and Bullinger with pastors in Zurich's rural parishes and in the Thurgau make these areas especially prominent, but there are also a number of correspondents from St. Gallen, Basel, Schaffhausen, and Bern with its extensive rural territory. Basel is an exceptional case, for it only became a member of the Swiss Confederation in 1501, but for the sake of continuity over time I have counted the Baslers who matriculated at a university before that date as Swiss.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to the predominantly German- and Czech-speaking areas of east-central Europe, a few network members came from modern-day Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

network obtained at least one degree in one of the higher faculties, whether theology, law, or medicine.<sup>21</sup> Another 18% received a master's degree, and a further 6% obtained a bachelor's degree. Roughly 4% were nobles who matriculated at a university but did not need to earn a degree to certify their social standing. Most of the participants in the correspondence network thus fit the definition of "learned elite" developed by the *Repertorium Academicum Germanicum*.<sup>22</sup> This high degree of education is not surprising, for it took years of study to acquire the vocabulary, master the grammar and syntax, and attain the stylistic elegance expected in a humanist letter.

The students within this correspondence network were also highly mobile. Not quite half of them matriculated at only one university (**Figure 3**), but that proportion falls to about 32% of those who also corresponded with the central German network. What is more striking is the mobility of the remaining students. Almost a quarter of them attended three or more universities, and that proportion rises to about 35% for those who also corresponded with men in the central German network. Just as significantly, 23% of these men attended one or more schools outside of German-speaking lands. Most of these students earned a degree in one of the higher faculties at a university in France or Italy. These statistics suggest that many members of the correspondence network had some access to financial resources, whether from their own family, sponsorship by a patron, or a benefice that allowed study. In this latter regard, it should be noted that 77 men were regular clergy before the Reformation, and their education was sponsored by their religious order, while many of those in the youngest cohort received stipends to support their study that were funded by secularized church property.

## Basel and the Education of the Network Members

This brings us to a consideration of where these men studied. Here it is important to keep in mind the relative size of the German universities. The largest were those of Vienna and Louvain, with an average yearly matriculation of over 500 students at the turn of the century.<sup>23</sup> Cologne, Leipzig, and Erfurt were only slightly smaller, matriculating between 300–400 students each year. Heidelberg and Rostock were in a middle category, matriculating on average between 130–180 students a year, and by the beginning of the sixteenth century the young university of Ingolstadt had almost reached the size of Heidelberg. The smallest universities were the remaining schools founded in the second half of the fifteenth century: Basel, Freiburg, and Tübingen in the south, and Greifswald in the far north. At

<sup>21</sup> I have included lower degrees in the higher faculties (bachelor of Bible or *Sentences*, licenses in theology and law) among these higher degrees. Schwinges estimates that the proportion of students receiving a bachelor's degree rose over the period 1350–1500, reaching as much as 45% by the end of the fifteenth century; Rainer Christoph SCHWINGES, *Europäische Studenten des späten Mittelalters*, in Alexander Patschovsky – Horst Rabe (eds.), *Die Universität in Alteuropa*, Konstanz, 1994, pp. 129–146.

<sup>22</sup> Rainer Christoph SCHWINGES, *Das Repertorium Academicum Germanicum (RAG) – Ursprung und Entwicklungen*, in: Kaspar Gubler – Christian Hesse – Rainer Christoph Schwinges (eds.), *Person und Wissen: Bilanz und Perspektiven*, Zürich 2022, pp. 1–17.

<sup>23</sup> The matriculation figures in this paragraph are taken from Rainer Christoph SCHWINGES, *Deutsche Universitätsbesucher im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte des alten Reiches*, Stuttgart 1986, pp. 69, 77, 88, 98, 113, 123, 141, 151, 161, 169, 175, and 182.

the turn of the century, Freiburg and Tübingen attracted 80–90 students a year, and Basel, originally the largest of these newer universities, had fallen to only about 50 matriculations a year, the same number as matriculated in Greifswald.<sup>24</sup> Last but not least, the universities of Wittenberg and Frankfurt/Oder were founded in the early years of the sixteenth century. Within a few years Wittenberg had attracted enough students to put it in the same category as Heidelberg, Rostock and Ingolstadt.

**Figure 4** shows where those who matriculated at only one university did their studies. Basel stands out as the most frequently attended university, despite its small size. Basel was especially attractive for Swiss students in the correspondence network: almost half of them matriculated in Basel.<sup>25</sup> Vienna, Heidelberg, Freiburg, and Tübingen were also popular choices for network members, but they lagged far behind the city on the Rhine. Paris drew more students than either Cologne or Ingolstadt, while Louvain attracted only a handful of students from the southern network, despite that university's size.<sup>26</sup> The students who matriculated at Marburg and Oxford merit special attention as reflecting the changed educational situation in Switzerland after the Reformation. They were all young men who studied at Zurich's Latin school and were then given stipends to go abroad to complete their education.

To some extent, university attendance reflects origin. It is well established that each of the universities had catchment areas from which they drew many of their students. In view of the large number of network members from southwest Germany and Switzerland, it is not surprising that the universities of the southwest would attract so many of them. Geographical proximity was less important, however, for those who matriculated at more than one university. A striking number chose to continue their education at one or more of the universities in Italy; France, too, attracted many of these advanced students (**Figure 5**). Within the German-speaking lands, Basel once again stands out for attracting the largest number of students overall, but Freiburg, Vienna, and Wittenberg attracted a larger number of students coming from another university. Vienna's college of poets clearly attracted many students, while Wittenberg's popularity is easily explained by the presence of Martin Luther and Philipp Melancthon. Freiburg's attraction was largely due to the law professor Ulrich Zasius.

**Figure 6** looks at the other end of a student's education. It shows those universities where ten or more network members earned their highest degree. Once again, Basel stands out from the other German universities. Italy was by far the favorite place to study law, and half of the law degrees earned there were obtained at Bologna. Italian universities were also the most popular location for the study of medicine, although the French universities were a close second. Among German universities, only Vienna granted doctorates in medicine to more than six network members. Not only Vadian but also the prominent humanists Johannes Cuspinian and Georg Collimitius had degrees in medicine from Vienna. Basel

<sup>24</sup> Basel's loss was Ingolstadt's gain: while the number of students in Basel fell gradually over the later fifteenth century, matriculation numbers in Ingolstadt rose significantly, placing it among the other medium-sized universities.

<sup>25</sup> Of the 126 Swiss who matriculated at only one university, 61 of them studied in Basel. Sixteen more matriculated in Vienna, and 13 in Paris. No other university attracted more than six Swiss students who studied at only one university. Another eighteen Swiss matriculated in Basel as their second or third university.

<sup>26</sup> Paris differed from the other French universities in attracting students to its arts faculty and to theology, while those studying elsewhere in France usually matriculated in law or medicine. In what follows, I have therefore distinguished between Paris and the other French universities.

is noteworthy for the number of master's degrees earned there, with Heidelberg and Paris tying for second place. Basel also granted more degrees in theology to network members than any other university except Wittenberg, although Freiburg and Heidelberg were close behind it.

Of the 82 students who first matriculated at Basel and then moved elsewhere, almost 25% chose Paris as their second university, and another six students matriculated at another French university. Of the ten students who came to Basel from elsewhere and then moved on to a third university, three matriculated in Paris.<sup>27</sup> This connection with France set Basel's students apart from those at other German universities, who were far more likely to go to Italy. Within Germany, Freiburg was the most popular university for students moving on from Basel, followed by Tübingen, and then Wittenberg and Vienna.<sup>28</sup> Freiburg and Tübingen were also the universities where students were most likely to have matriculated before coming to Basel.<sup>29</sup> As Dieter Mertens has pointed out, the geographical proximity of these three universities to some extent compensated for their small size.<sup>30</sup>

Last but not least, **Figure 7** looks at the change in first matriculation over time at the nine most frequently attended universities. To interpret it correctly, one must keep in mind that the correspondence network as it existed between 1510 and 1555 included men from three different generations. The oldest generation, the 139 men who matriculated up through 1495, included the most prominent humanists active in Germany in the early sixteenth century: men such as Jakob Wimpfeling, Willibald Pirckheimer, and Johannes Reuchlin.<sup>31</sup> Many of them developed their humanist interests during study in Italy, and virtually all of them remained loyal to the Roman church. By 1510, however, they were approaching the end of their careers, and so they comprise only about 16% of the total number of network members. Basel and Heidelberg were the most important universities for this generation, although Erfurt, Tübingen and Freiburg were also popular as the university to begin their studies.

The middle generation comprises the 542 men who matriculated between 1496 and 1525. This generation can be divided into two cohorts. The older cohort of 149 students matriculated in the decade between 1495 and 1505, and it included the major Protestant reformers, such as Martin Luther and Huldrych Zwingli, as well as leading Catholic controversialists, such as Johannes Eck and Johannes Cochlaeus. The younger cohort, the 393 students who matriculated between 1506 and 1525, was more decisively Protestant. It included a number of influential leaders of evangelical churches in the 1530s and after – men such as Johannes Brenz in Schwäbisch Hall (and eventually Tübingen), and Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich. Unlike the previous generation, the members of the middle generation did not need to go to Italy to develop their humanist interests, although some of them did do so. Instead, they benefited from the modest curricular reforms introduced in Germany's universities at the

<sup>27</sup> The movement between Paris and Basel was one way. Although Basel students moved to Paris, there were no students who matriculated first in Paris and then moved to Basel or any of the German universities.

<sup>28</sup> Twenty students matriculated in Paris, ten in Tübingen, seven in Wittenberg and six in Vienna.

<sup>29</sup> Nine of the 32 students who matriculated in Basel as their second school came from Freiburg, and six from Tübingen. Of the thirteen students for whom Basel was their third matriculation, three came from Freiburg and another three from Tübingen.

<sup>30</sup> Dieter MERTENS, *Austausch und Abgrenzung: Die oberrheinischen Universitäten an der Wende zum 16. Jahrhundert*, Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde 102, 2002, 7–22.

<sup>31</sup> There are 33 individuals in the database who matriculated at a university but for whom I do not have a matriculation date. Based on their active career dates, the majority of these belonged to the oldest generation.

turn of the century, and they championed the more thorough-going curricular revisions that shaped the following generation. They were thus a transitional group distinct from both their predecessors and their successors. Because of the size of this generation, the number of matriculations at every school increased tremendously during the period between 1496 and 1515. Basel continued to attract a significant number of these beginning students, but first matriculation in Vienna grew exponentially through 1515. The Reformation caused a marked drop in overall matriculations in the 1520s, but it also contributed to the striking rise in matriculations at Wittenberg.

The youngest generation, the 153 students who matriculated after 1525, was almost entirely Protestant, and several of its members became important second-generation reformers. Virtually all were born in 1510 or after and so were shaped not only by the religious divisions of the Reformation, but also by the curricular reforms adopted in the new Protestant academies and universities. Exposed to the humanist disciplines at an early age, this generation gave birth to the late humanism that developed over the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>32</sup>

The crisis in university education caused by the Reformation is responsible for the sharp decline in matriculations during the decade between 1526 and 1535. The university of Basel was particularly hard-hit: it officially closed after the city's adoption of the Reformation in 1529, and in the decade after reopening in 1532 it was weakened by uncertain financial support, rapid turnover of its faculty, and a severe outbreak of the plague. Only in the mid-1540s did the university's situation stabilize. In light of these difficulties, it is significant that more members of the correspondence network matriculated in Basel during the decades between 1526 and 1555 than at any other university. In contrast, the staunchly Catholic universities lost their attractiveness for network members: in the three decades after 1525, only seven of them began their studies in Freiburg, and only two in Vienna. Ingolstadt had never attracted many future members of the correspondence network, but its popularity too declined after 1525.

Basel's relatively high matriculation numbers in the decades following the Reformation reflect the lack of Protestant options for university study. The University of Marburg was founded in 1527, and the university of Tübingen became a Protestant institution after Duke Ulrich's restoration to Württemberg in 1534, but students complained about disorganized instruction and expensive living conditions in both cities.<sup>33</sup> Luther's intransigent rejection of the Zurich church made Wittenberg an unattractive alternative, although a handful of Swiss students did study there in the 1530s and 1540s, and Heinrich Bullinger's son matriculated there in 1555. For those who did not want or need a university degree, the newly founded academies in Zurich, Strasbourg, Bern, and Lausanne offered another alternative for students, especially since the leaders of these churches did not consider degrees to be important.<sup>34</sup> Eleven members of the southern correspondence network, all of them Swiss,

<sup>32</sup> See the classic work by Erich TRUNZ, *Der deutsche Späthumanismus um 1600 als Standeskultur*, *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Erziehung und des Unterrichts* 21, 1931, pp. 17–53.

<sup>33</sup> See for instance, the letters to Heinrich Bullinger in Ulrich GÄBLER et al. (eds.), *Heinrich Bullinger Briefwechsel*, Zurich 1973– (hereafter HBBW): from Zurich students Johannes Wolf (in Tübingen), 13 April 1540, HBBW 10: 89–92, no. 1383, and Rudolf Gwalther (in Marburg), 17 June 1540, HBBW 10: 127–30, no. 1406.

<sup>34</sup> Heinrich Bullinger dismissed the value of a degree when the Zurich students in Marburg wrote to ask his permission to work towards this goal; to Gwalther, 29 Nov. 1540, HBBW 10: 191–4, no. 1436a. In 1539, Oswald Myconius and Simon Grynaeus vigorously opposed Basel's new statutes requiring all professors to

studied only at one or more of these new Protestant academies and never matriculated at a university, while others moved from Basel to Strasbourg because the level of instruction was allegedly higher in Strasbourg.<sup>35</sup> This attitude was not necessarily shared by German students, however, since at least some of them preferred to study at a university.<sup>36</sup>

## University Attendance and Network Affiliation

A brief comparison of Basel's place in the Swiss/south German network with that of Wittenberg in the central German network highlights the differing university experience of members of each network. Of the 556 individuals in the central German network who matriculated at a university, two-thirds of them studied at Wittenberg. Furthermore, two-thirds of these students chose Wittenberg as their first, and often only, university. Only eleven members of the central German network matriculated in Basel. The central German network was thus more highly centralized than the network stretching through southern Germany and Switzerland. Its members had a more uniform university experience, with less exposure to a variety of teachers and contact with a more homogeneous group of students.

Basel, too, had a significant proportion of students who studied only in that city, but a higher proportion of the southern correspondence network had a more diverse educational background. The small size of Basel's university, coupled with the city's reputation as a humanist center, was an important factor contributing to the development of that network. Since at any given time there were probably no more than between 100 and 150 students in Basel, it was relatively easy for students who shared an interest in the humanist disciplines and studied with the same teachers to form friendships. Basel's reputation for humanist learning was not necessarily equaled by the distinction of its higher faculties, however, and so some students left to matriculate at a second university. It is striking, for instance, to see how many Basel students moved to Freiburg to study law.<sup>37</sup> This mobility was another factor important for the formation of network ties, for while students were writing to friends and former teachers still in Basel, they were also developing another circle of acquaintances with whom they might later correspond. Up through 1517, this mobility was chiefly between universities in the south, but by 1520 Luther and Melancthon were attracting southern students to Wittenberg. The outbreak of the eucharistic controversy brought estrangement, but Wittenberg continued to draw a few students from the south. In contrast, Basel's attraction was largely limited to Switzerland and the German southwest,

hold the appropriate degree for their faculty. By the second half of the century, Basel would expect its pastors to have degrees, but degrees were not required by other Swiss churches; Amy Nelson BURNETT, *Local Boys and Peripatetic Scholars: Theology Students in Basel, 1542–1642*, in: Herman J. Selderhuis – Marcus Wriedt (eds.), *Konfession, Migration und Elitenbildung: Studien zur Theologenausbildung des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Leiden 2007, pp. 109–139.

<sup>35</sup> Josias Simler to Bullinger, 1 June 1547, HBBW 20: 234 no. 2921. Because the eleven Swiss students did not matriculate at a university, they are not otherwise included in this study.

<sup>36</sup> On 19 April 1547 Johannes Haller commended to Bullinger several Augsburg stipendiates who had initially been sent to Tübingen but were now on their way to Basel via Zurich. Haller would have preferred them to remain in Zurich as students, but the students themselves wanted to attend a university; HBBW 20: 140–7, no. 2884.

<sup>37</sup> The most prominent example is Bonifacius Amerbach, son of the Basel printer Johannes Amerbach. Bonifacius began his university studies in Basel, moved to Freiburg to study law with Zasius, and then completed his legal training in Avignon before becoming professor of law in Basel.

and it always competed with other universities in the region. But no other university came close to Basel's prominent role in educating those who became members of the Swiss/South German correspondence network.

University attendance was crucial for the formation of the learned elite at the end of the Middle Ages, but this analysis has demonstrated that we must also consider where individuals studied. Despite its small size, the university of Basel played a central role in the early careers of many of those men who became teachers, pastors, physicians, and jurists in southern Germany and Switzerland through the first half of the sixteenth century. Basel's prominence was striking already at the end of the fifteenth century, and it only continued to grow over the first two decades of the new century. The religious changes of the 1520s brought turmoil to all of Germany's universities, but ultimately, they heightened Basel's importance for educating a new generation of Protestant intellectuals in Switzerland and the southern half of the Empire.

The later careers of most of Basel's students may be lost to history. A significant number of them, however, used the skills they had learned and drew on the shared experiences of study in Basel to maintain contact with like-minded individuals. Their participation in the correspondence network that spanned south Germany and Switzerland helps us appreciate the broader impact of Basel's university in the first half of the sixteenth century.

AMY NELSON BURNETT

## **Návštěvnost univerzit a rozvoj korespondenční sítě: případ Basilej, cca 1500–1550**

### RESUMÉ

Studie představuje prosopografickou analýzu sociální sítě, kterou odhalila dochovaná korespondence dvou desítek humanistů a reformátorů z jižního Německa a Švýcarska v letech 1510–1555. Více než polovina členů této korespondenční sítě získala magisterský nebo vyšší titul, což je řadí mezi německou učenou elitu. Jako studenti navazovali tyto muži kontakty s budoucími kolegy, zaměstnavateli a patrony, a proto byla jejich rozhodnutí o tom, kde studovat, důležitá. Největší počet budoucích členů sítě se imatrikuloval na basilejské univerzitě, ačkoli to byla nejmenší univerzita v německy mluvící Evropě. Mnoho basilejských studentů také studovalo na některé z dalších univerzit v jižním Německu nebo pokračovalo ve studiu ve Francii či Itálii. Malá velikost basilejské univerzity a mobilita jejích studentů byly dva faktory, které podpořily tvorbu sítě. Basilejská univerzita přitahovala studenty na počátku 16. století, ale byla zvláště důležitá pro generaci narozenou po roce 1510 jako jedno z mála míst, kde mohli protestanti získat titul. Vliv Basileje byl z velké části omezen na jižní Německo a Švýcarsko, ale hrál roli při formování učené elity tohoto regionu, která byla analogická té ve Wittenbergu po střední a severní Německo.

*prof. Amy Nelson Burnett*

*Paula and D.B. Varner University at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA*  
*aburnett1@unl.edu*