

VOLTAIRE FOUNDATION

University of Oxford

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22



Introduction



The Voltaire Foundation was founded by Theodore Besterman in 1971, so in 2021 we celebrated our 50th anniversary. The Foundation passed to the University by bequest in 1976, and is now a self-funding department within the Humanities Division.

2021/22 has been an exciting moment for the Voltaire Foundation in its ongoing and planned transition, as it evolves away from its many years as a print publisher, and is re-framing its identity as (1) an international research institute devoted to Enlightenment studies and 18th-century research in general, (2) a research centre specialising in digital scholarly editions of 18th-century authors and (3) a digital humanities research lab devoted to digital experimentation.

This year, as we celebrate the completion of the *Complete Works of Voltaire*, we are looking forward to an exciting digital future.

Professor Nicholas Cronk, Director



Cover image: © Axel Le Roy, 2022 | Above: Celebration images © John Cairns



The Voltaire Foundation has always been more than a publishing venture, but, now that its main publishing purpose is fulfilled, the Trustees wish to migrate its focus more centrally into research.

The vision is to build on our work on Voltaire to create a Centre for Enlightenment Studies. The beacon which was lit in France in the 18th century shone much more widely: into the German lands and Prussia, to Russia, Italy, Sweden and the United States, and, of course, to Scotland and England. The opportunity is to do something quite novel, spanning Europe and the Atlantic, dissolving disciplinary boundaries, and embracing the digital research techniques which we have helped pioneer.

In a darkening world, I happen to believe that the values of the Enlightenment have never been more important, and that society ignores or denigrates them at its peril. This academic project will help sustain scholarly enquiry into them, in all their complexity and richness.

Miles Young, Chair of Board of Trustees



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Reception to celebrate the *Complete works of Voltaire*, Weston Library, 17 March 2022

Œuvres complètes de Voltaire / Complete works of Voltaire

Theodore Besterman, the founding father of the *Complete works of Voltaire*, wrote that 'about 15 million of Voltaire's written words have come down to us, enough to make 20 Bibles'. Thanks to him, we have now managed to fit those 15,000,000 words, together with commentary and annotation, into 205 handsome, blue-bound volumes. The final volumes of the monumental Voltaire edition have appeared in the course of 2022.

In the half-century that has elapsed since this project began, the world of publishing and the world of scholarship have both changed in ways unimaginable to the editors who first planned this edition. The fine laid paper and the beautiful blue cloth binding that Besterman chose in the 1960s were then the norm of high-quality printing; they have now become luxury items. This is the last time that the totality of Voltaire's writings will be printed in a completely new edition, and we have stubbornly maintained to the end the high standards that Besterman established at the start.

So this has been a year of celebrations. The Royal Academy in Brussels celebrated the edition's completion with a conference in November on Voltaire's irony in today's world and a lecture given by Nicholas Cronk at the Academy on the topic 'Comment célébrer Voltaire?'.

We held our Oxford celebration of the *Complete works* in March: after an introduction by the Vice-Chancellor, we watched a film, *Editing Voltaire*, and then heard a lecture given by Robert Darnton, 'Theatricality and violence in Paris, 1788', followed by drinks in the Weston Library, and then dinner in the magnificent setting of the Divinity School.

Top: Professor Robert Darnton, delivering his lecture in the Sheldonian Theatre, 17 March 2022

Reception to celebrate the *Complete works of Voltaire*, Weston Library, 17 March 2022: Nicholas Cronk, Lord Ricketts, French Ambassador Mme Catherine Colonna, Vice-Chancellor Louise Richardson, Chancellor Lord Patten



In May, the British Academy supported a celebration in London: Marian Hobson spoke about Voltaire, and then Adam Gopnik gave a talk 'Once, a philosopher: Voltaire the Liberal', followed by a drinks reception.

Finally, in June, the *Société des études voltairiennes* used its annual conference to celebrate the *Complete works*, 'Voltaire 2022: œuvres complètes, œuvre ouverte'. Held over two days, the conference began in the beautiful surroundings of the Hôtel Lauzun on the Ile Saint-Louis (only a few doors from where Voltaire stayed with Emilie Du Châtelet in the 1740s), and ended with drinks on the lawns of the Hôtel de Charost, built in the 1720s, and since 1814 the Residence of the British Ambassador in Paris.

The *Complete works of Voltaire* may be the last collective edition to be printed on paper, but these volumes now form the nucleus of the future digital edition that will carry forward scholarly research into Voltaire, communicating it to new generations of researchers. We are now looking forward to celebrating the first launch in 2024 of *Digital Voltaire*!



“The Complete Works of Voltaire are unquestionably one of the most prestigious publications in humanities scholarship in the UK. The excellence of the published volumes is recognised worldwide.”

Arts and Humanities Research Council report

From top: Conference at the British Ambassador's Residence in Paris, 10 June 2022

Adam Gopnik, speaking at the British Academy, 26 May 2022

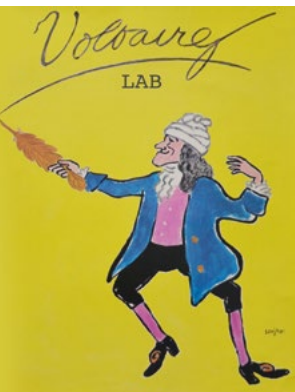
Members of the *Complete works of Voltaire* editorial team:

Nicholas Cronk, Gillian Pink, Janet Godden



The Voltaire Lab

The Voltaire Lab, now in its fourth year of existence, continues to be a hub of digital research activity centred around Voltaire's digital corpora and, more generally, research and development at the interface of digital humanities and 18th-century studies.



Thanks to the generous support of the Astra Foundation, 2021/22 was a particularly active year for the Lab and its associated researchers. Most notably, we named the first Astra Foundation Research Fellow in Digital Humanities (Glenn Roe, Sorbonne Université), a four-year part-time post that will lay the groundwork for a permanent position in digital humanities research at the Voltaire Foundation in the coming

years. This appointment also places the Voltaire Lab at the centre of the new European research project ModERN, a five-year European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator grant that begun in 2022.

Currently the Lab's research programme is organised around four main projects: Voltaire's Library, Voltaire's Manuscripts, Voltaire's Poetry and Voltaire's Life. We welcomed a visiting doctoral student, Axel Le Roy (Sorbonne/Ecole pratique des haute études), working on representations of China in 18th-century digital corpora, and invited Katie McDonough (Turing Institute), an expert in 18th-century spatial history and digital humanities, as Voltaire Lab visiting scholar for 2022/23. These invitations, along with the above research programme, underscore the Lab's commitment to nurturing early-career researchers while encouraging interdisciplinary experimentation across the wide fields of 18th-century studies and digital humanities.

Voltaire Library Project

A collaboration between the Observatoire des textes, des idées et des corpus (ObTIC, Sorbonne) and the Voltaire Foundation, this project brings together digital humanities, bibliography and literary studies to develop a database platform for the data entry and analysis of Voltaire's library. More than 6,000 books and related documents constituted Voltaire's working library at his home, the château de Ferney, in the years before his death. Data entry, which involves linking each author in the catalogue to authoritative

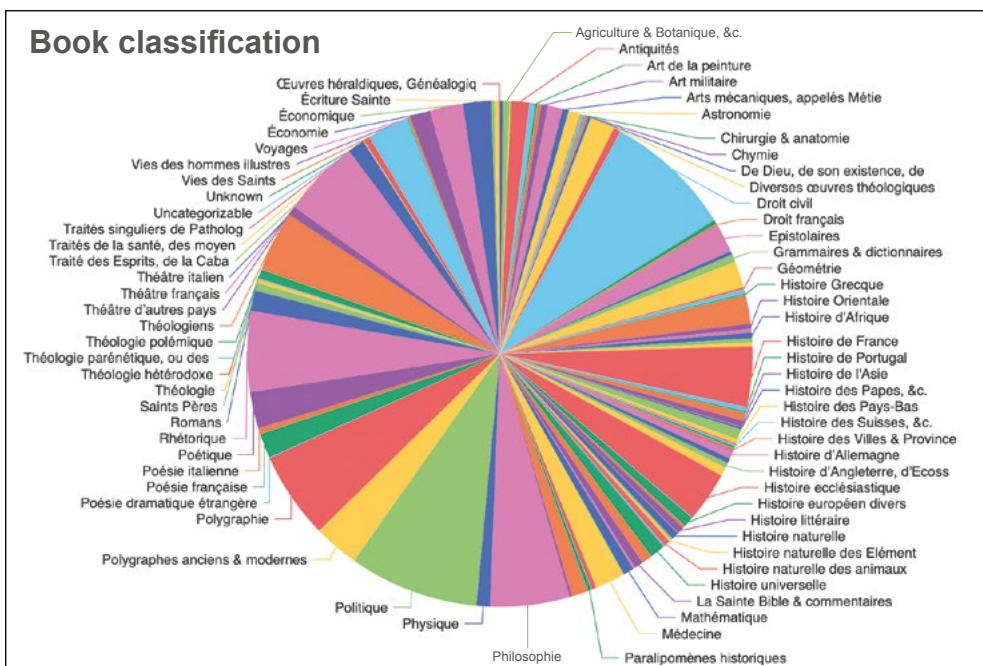
records on **data.bnf.fr**, is currently almost 80% complete. The complete dataset will be searchable according to multiple criteria, including thematic categories, and the whole resource ultimately integrated with Digital Voltaire. The project is part-funded by the John Fell Fund (University of Oxford), which will enable a state-of-the-art user interface to be designed and implemented. We expect to be able to soft-launch a preliminary search and analysis interface in spring 2023.

Voltaire Manuscripts Project

We are delighted to have appointed Zoe Screti as our Astra Foundation Research Fellow in Manuscript Studies. Thanks to the Astra Foundation's generous funding, Zoe will produce an authoritative online catalogue of Voltaire manuscripts that will replace existing printed lists, will include accurate and detailed descriptions, and will link to the many pertinent collections worldwide.

**Jacqueline Lambert-David Southam
Collection**

The Lambert-David collection is a major ensemble of 18th-century manuscripts, hitherto largely unknown to Voltaire scholars, and running to several hundreds of pages mainly of letters, verse and documents to do with historical and legal matters. A preliminary audit reveals that it contains documents that shed light on the reception of Voltaire's work



in his own time and beyond, as well as a dossier of verse, some of which is by Voltaire, some attributed and some addressed to Voltaire, all of which will need to be inventoried and studied carefully. In collaboration with the Université de Sherbrooke (Québec) and thanks to funding from the Polonsky Foundation and Ethel Groffier, the collection has been digitised with a view to online publication. Sonia Blouin, a master's student at Sherbrooke, carried out the photography to the very highest technical standards, and the results will feed into a searchable online database using international image interoperability framework (IIIF) standards. A pilot site, showcasing a selection of manuscripts of different types, can be viewed at <https://voltaire-pilot.ox.hasdai.org>. Sonia wrote about her experience in a post which can be read on the [Voltaire Foundation Blog](#).

Voltaire's Poetry and Voltaire's Life

Investigations into Voltaire's poetry—an often overlooked aspect of his literary output—are underway thanks to two early-career researchers attached to the Voltaire Lab: Roman Kuhn (British Academy Newton Fellow), who is developing a digital catalogue of 18th-century occasional poetry; and James Gawley (Astra Postdoctoral Fellow Sorbonne-Oxford), who is analysing Voltaire's epic allusions to classical Latin as a key element of Voltaire's style.

We have begun the digitisation of René Pomeau's definitive biography, *Voltaire en son temps*, which will serve as a testbed for biographic visualisation, named-entity analysis and entity linking in the coming years.

British Academy Research Project Status



The British Academy's recognised Academy Research Projects are major long-term infrastructural

projects or research facilities, intended to produce works of scholarship. The *Complete works of Voltaire* benefited from this status from the 1970s onwards; in 2022, following the successful completion of the print edition, we were delighted that the Academy agreed to extend its imprimatur to *Digital Voltaire*, and also to contribute to funding the digitisation and editorial work. The citation in the minutes from the Committee notes that 'this outstanding project

would represent a standard for this kind of project in the future' and even that 'this would be a good exemplar to highlight to other ARPs'.

Digital d'Holbach

Capitalising on its expertise in the creation of top-class critical editions, in 2018 the Voltaire Foundation launched the Digital d'Holbach project. The aim of this project is to create a digital scholarly edition of the writings of Paul-Thiry d'Holbach, one of the most prominent philosophers in 18th-century Europe and a famously elusive and intriguing author whose radical texts advocated for democratic reforms and the recognition of civil, political and human rights. Under the direction of Ruggero Sciuto, Digital d'Holbach will make a vital contribution to the field of 18th-century studies: not only will it offer a more nuanced and complex image of d'Holbach's works and ideas, it will also encourage a fundamental reconsideration of the nature of the 'Radical Enlightenment', helping scholars to gain a much better understanding of some of the main philosophical, religious, scientific and political debates taking place in the decades preceding the French Revolution.

The Digital d'Holbach project has made considerable progress in 2021/22 thanks to funds from the Leverhulme Trust and the Fondazione San Paolo in Turin. Editions of two texts by d'Holbach (the *Lettres à Eugénie* and *La Contagion sacrée*) are now approaching completion, and work is underway on five more editions commissioned from scholars in the UK, the US and France. Highlights from 2022 include the release of an updated version of *Tout d'Holbach*, a searchable resource providing access to transcripts of all d'Holbach's works, in collaboration with Clovis Gladstone (University of Chicago). Laura Nicoli (Research Fellow at the Fondazione 1563 per l'Arte e la Cultura in partnership with the Voltaire Foundation) has brought out a collection of essays with Brill, with a second volume to be edited by Ruggero Sciuto focusing specifically on the *Système de la nature* now under contract. In addition, Ruggero Sciuto has secured a British Academy/Leverhulme grant to work on an edition of d'Holbach's correspondence.

See the
blog here



See the pilot
page here



Development news

The Voltaire Foundation benefited from the generosity of several foundations and individuals during the year, enabling us to expand our activities and continue work on some important projects. Among those who have supported us during the year, we would like to thank and acknowledge the following:

Astra Foundation



The Astra Foundation made a gift to the Voltaire Foundation of £395,000 to fund innovative digital research, and enable the

appointment of Glenn Roe as the Astra Foundation Research Fellow in Digital Humanities for four years from Michaelmas 2021. Glenn Roe co-directs the Voltaire Lab, fulfilling the Voltaire Foundation's vision for the digital humanities in Oxford. He and Nicholas Cronk will be supervising a series of postdoctoral researchers, also funded by the Astra Foundation.

“ This transformational gift will enable the Voltaire Foundation to secure its position at the heart of digital humanities research in Oxford and internationally. We are most grateful to the Astra Foundation for its support. ”

Nicholas Cronk

“ We are delighted to support the Voltaire Foundation in its ambitions as a pioneer in digital Enlightenment studies. With the efforts of world-leading researchers, we are excited that the works of Voltaire and other Enlightenment authors will reach new audiences and engage younger generations through the outreach activities of this grant. ”

Elisabeth de Kergorlay, Founder of the Astra Foundation



Polonsky Foundation

The Polonsky Foundation granted funding for the digitisation of some important manuscripts in the collection of the Voltaire Foundation, and in the Lambert-David collection in Canada. The Polonsky Foundation has continued to support *Digital Voltaire*: the digitisation of the *Complete works of Voltaire*.

Mme Ethel Groffier

Ethel Groffier's generous support will enable the Voltaire Foundation to complete the digitisation and editing of the Lambert-David collection of manuscripts.

Martin J Gross Family Foundation

The Martin J Gross Family Foundation funded the publication of *Voltaire: an Oxford celebration*, which was specially published to celebrate the successful conclusion of the *Complete works of Voltaire*. Marty Gross is an alumnus of Brasenose College and has been a generous supporter of the Bodleian Library. The Martin J Gross Family Foundation has also supported the cataloguing of Voltaire's personal library, housed in the Russian National Library in St Petersburg.



Development Board

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Opposite: Dinner to celebrate the *Complete works of Voltaire*, Divinity School, 17 March 2022

From top: Reception to celebrate the *Complete works of Voltaire*, Weston Library, 17 March 2022

Dinner to celebrate the *Complete works of Voltaire*, Divinity School, 17 March 2022

Reception at the British Academy, 26 May 2022

Dinner to celebrate the *Complete works of Voltaire*, Divinity School, 17 March 2022



Academic events

The annual Besterman Lecture was given by Sophia Rosenfeld (University of Pennsylvania) on the topic 'How the Enlightenment understood truth – and why that matters'. The lecture was livestreamed on 18 November 2021 and subsequently made available on YouTube, where it can still be watched.



Professor Sophia Rosenfeld

Enlightenment Workshop

This year, Morgan Golf-French kindly took on the organisation of the workshop while Avi Lifschitz, Academic Programme Director, was on sabbatical.

The Voltaire Foundation Enlightenment Workshop is the UK's premier research seminar for 18th-century studies. Held on consecutive Mondays during Oxford's Hilary Term (January–March), the workshop offers a unique interdisciplinary space where scholars from across the humanities present and discuss cutting-edge research. Held online, the 2022 series brought together speakers as geographically distant as Las Vegas and Göttingen and participants from as far afield as Australia and Japan. Moreover, the programme showcased important work from across the profession. Indeed, the first talk – on 18th-century French libraries – was given by the founder of the workshop, Laurence Brockliss. Meanwhile Conor Bollins – who discussed population debates of the 18th-century – was awarded his PhD as recently as 2021.

Perhaps most importantly, this year's programme offered extraordinary thematic range. In addition to libraries and population debates, speakers discussed Scottish political economy (Joanna Innes), French artisanal technology (Marie Thébaud-Sorger), Russian Enlightenment theology (Kelsey Rubin-Detlev), Spanish contributions to the Enlightenment concept of critique (Anita Traninger) and the pre-history of the Voltaire Foundation itself (Gregory S. Brown). Two papers, given by Silvia Sebastiani and Devin Vartija respectively, grappled with the thorny problem of racial inequality in 18th-century thought.

Finally, Martin Gierl offered a rousing analysis of academic journals in the German Enlightenment, with serious implications for how we think about the public sphere more broadly. Each talk engaged with themes and questions relevant both within and beyond academic study.

Showcasing outstanding research from around the world, the 2022 series once again demonstrated the Voltaire Foundation's importance as an interdisciplinary centre for 18th-century studies. The landscape of Enlightenment studies remains as vital and dynamic as ever. We look forward to the workshop's in-person return in January 2023.



Besterman Lecture in the Grove Auditorium, Magdalen College, 18 November 2021

“The Voltaire Foundation has been one of the world’s great publishers of 18th-century studies over the past half-century. Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment, a fully digitised and continually expanding collection of almost 600 monographs distributed across the globe in multiple formats, would be an outstanding output from any scholarly endeavour. It is just one strand of the Voltaire Foundation’s remarkable work.”

**Anthony Cond, Chief Executive,
Liverpool University Press**

The *Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment* collection, as we enter the 2022/23 university year, remains very well positioned in terms of editorial development. We currently have manuscripts in production for all our volumes up until the end of summer 2023, and the volumes for the following autumn will enter production shortly. The editorial calendar is scheduled up to the end of spring 2024.

Among the books that we have published in the past academic year of 2021/22, we can highlight the June volume, by Erin Helyard, *Clementi and the woman at the piano*, a monograph on the composition but also the entrepreneurship, in commercialising scores and the fortepiano, of Muzio Clemente in London. The author, an accomplished musicologist, composer and performer, argues that Clemente’s works were particularly oriented towards performance by women in domestic spaces. This book is accompanied by a range of resources on the LUP Digital Collaboration Hub built on the Manifold Scholar platform, including an extensive digital companion of scores, recording of compositions, photographs of the instruments used and musicological explanations of the works.

Also noteworthy in our 2022 releases is an *hors série* special volume, a private-label publication of the address Robert Darnton delivered last March

in celebration of the successful conclusion of the *Complete works of Voltaire*. This volume, entitled *Theatricality and violence in Paris, 1789*, is being offered as an open-access resource within the OSE Online archive.

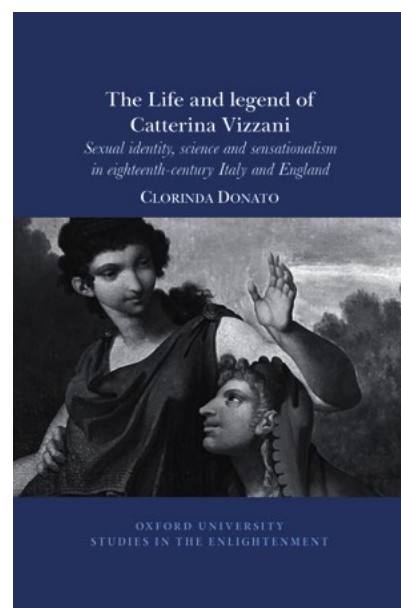
We also published in the past year two books with a global scope that are of particular note: Pedro Luengo’s monograph on global influences on and from court architecture in Qing-era Beijing and a French-language volume of essays co-edited by Charlotte Guichard and Stéphane Van Damme, on the circulation of antiquities around the globe in the 18th-century, a topic of great contemporary interest.

In September we released *Enlightenment past and present* by the prominent intellectual historian Anthony LaVopa, addressing the evolution of intellectual historiography across his career, with a focus on the relationship of intellectual history to social history.

2021 American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI) inaugural book awards

Clorinda Donato (Director of the Clorinda Donato Center for Global Romance Languages and Translation Studies at California State University Long Beach and Professor of French and Italian) has won the 2021 AATI inaugural book award in the category ‘1800-Present: Film, Media, & Cultural Studies’ for her book *The Life and legend of Catterina Vizzani. Sexual identity, science and sensationalism in eighteenth-century Italy and England* (Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment).

The AATI committee said: ‘*This timely study skilfully and persuasively weaves contemporary relevance into the discussion by exploring questions of gender fluidity, sexual politics and cultural norms.*’



Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment 2021/22 volumes:

Cyrus Masroori, Whitney Mannies, John Christian Laursen (eds), *Persia and the Enlightenment* (2021:09)

Mauro Azzura, *Un philosophe des Lumières entre Naples et Paris: Ferdinando Galiani (1728-1787)* (2021:10)

Tracy Rutler, *Queering the Enlightenment: kinship and gender in eighteenth-century French literature* (2021:11)

Miriam Franchina, *Paul Rapin Thoyras and the art of eighteenth-century historiography* (2021:12)

Olivia Sabee, *Theories of ballet in the age of the Encyclopédie* (2022:01)

Jessica Stacey, *Narrative, catastrophe and historicity in eighteenth-century French literature* (2022:02)

Charlotte Guichard, Stéphane Van Damme (eds), *Les Antiquités dépayssées: histoire globale de la culture antique au siècle des Lumières* (2022:03)

Pedro Luengo, *Global architecture for eighteenth-century Beijing: building Qing Enlightenment* (2022:04)

Síofra Pierse, Emma M. Dunne (eds), *Turmoil: instability and insecurity in the eighteenth-century Francophone text* (2022:05)

Erin Helyard, *Clementi and the woman at the piano: virtuosity and the market for music in eighteenth-century London* (2022:06)

Céline Spector, Johanna Lenne-Cornuez (eds), *Rousseau et Locke: dialogues critiques* (2022:07)

Thomas Biskup, Benjamin Marschke, Andreas Pečar, Damien Tricoire (eds), *Enlightenment at court: patrons, philosophes, and reformers in eighteenth-century Europe* (2022:08)

Photo: Professor Robert Darnton, delivering his lecture in the Sheldonian Theatre, 17 March 2022

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