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# ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

## VOLTAIRE FOUNDATION UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD





## Introduction

The Voltaire Foundation was founded by Theodore Besterman in 1971, so in 2021 we celebrate our 50th anniversary. The Foundation passed to the University by bequest in 1976, and is now a self-funding department within the Humanities Division. In 2021-2022 the Voltaire Foundation finds itself at an exciting moment in its ongoing and planned transition, as it evolves away from its forty-year long activities as a print publisher, and is re-framing its identity as a research institute. The values of the Enlightenment have never been more important or more relevant. As we look forward, the Voltaire Foundation will foster research into Enlightenment studies

- across European nations and in America
- across disciplinary boundaries
- and embracing innovative digital research.

Professor Nicholas Cronk, Director

## Development News

The Voltaire Foundation was established by a generous bequest from our Founder, Theodore Besterman, which has formed the basis of funding for the publication of the Complete Works. As we transform into a hub for scholarly digital research, we are seeking additional support for our new programmes. Our Development Board, chaired by Julien Sevaux, is overseeing fundraising initiatives to endow key posts and research projects, supported by our new Head of Philanthropy, Simon Crookall.

We are immensely grateful to Philippe Beaufour and Julien Sevaux for their support towards the publication of volume 147 of the *Œuvres Complètes de Voltaire*.

## *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire: volumes published this year*

Vol.29C *Précis du siècle de Louis XV* (III)

Volume Editors: Janet Godden, James Hanrahan

ISBN 978-0-7294-1226-1

Vol.6B *Lettres sur les Anglais* (II)

Volume Editors: Nicholas Cronk, Nick Treuherz et al.

ISBN 978-0-7294-1168-4

Vol.146 *Poésies attribuées à Voltaire*

Volume Editors: Simon Davies, Helder Mendes Baiao, Georges Pilard, Martin Smith

ISBN 978-0-7294-1179-0

## Complete Works of Voltaire / Œuvres complètes de Voltaire



The first volumes in this series were published in 1968, and the final ones will be published in 2021-2022. Progress towards the completion of this monumental 203-volume project is both exciting, and sad. Sad, because as the project comes to an end, our expert editorial team has to shrink, and this year we said goodbye to two long-standing colleagues, Pippa Faucheux and Georges Pilard, both of whom have made enormously valuable and lasting contributions to the project. Exciting, too, because we can now glimpse the end of the tunnel: this year, we published three volumes: the final volume of the three-volume set of the *Précis du siècle de Louis XV* (vol.29C), the second volume of the three-volume *Lettres sur les Anglais* (vol.6B), and a volume of Voltaire's unattributed verse (vol.146). In parallel we have been preparing the final two volumes and the index volume, which will complete the collection. We are now planning celebration parties in Oxford, London and Paris.

### Modern Language Association Prize

Voltaire had a habit of writing, often extensively, in the margins of his books, and Volume 145 (2019), *Notes et écrits marginaux conservés hors de la Bibliothèque nationale de Russie*, brings together and describes for the first time the entire corpus of Voltaire's known annotated works outside the library in St Petersburg. The volume contains editions by an international team of 15 colleagues, ranging from early career researchers to the most senior scholars in the field, working in the UK, France, Russia, the USA and Canada: Samuel Bailey, Jean Dagen, Ethel Groffier, John R. Iverson, Edouard Langille, Christiane Mervaud, Christophe Paillard, Jean-Alexandre Perras, Gillian Pink, John Renwick, Alain Sandrier, Gerhard Stenger, Gemma Tidman, David Williams and Irina Zaitseva. This was an extraordinarily complex work to design, co-ordinate and edit, and it was Dr Gillian Pink at the Voltaire Foundation who oversaw the progress of this edition from its inception and who wrote the general introduction. The volume has been awarded 'honourable mention' for the 2020 MLA Prize for Collaborative, Bibliographical, or Archival Scholarship. This is very special recognition for the volume, and for the Voltaire edition as a whole: warmest congratulations to Gillian Pink and to all her collaborators.



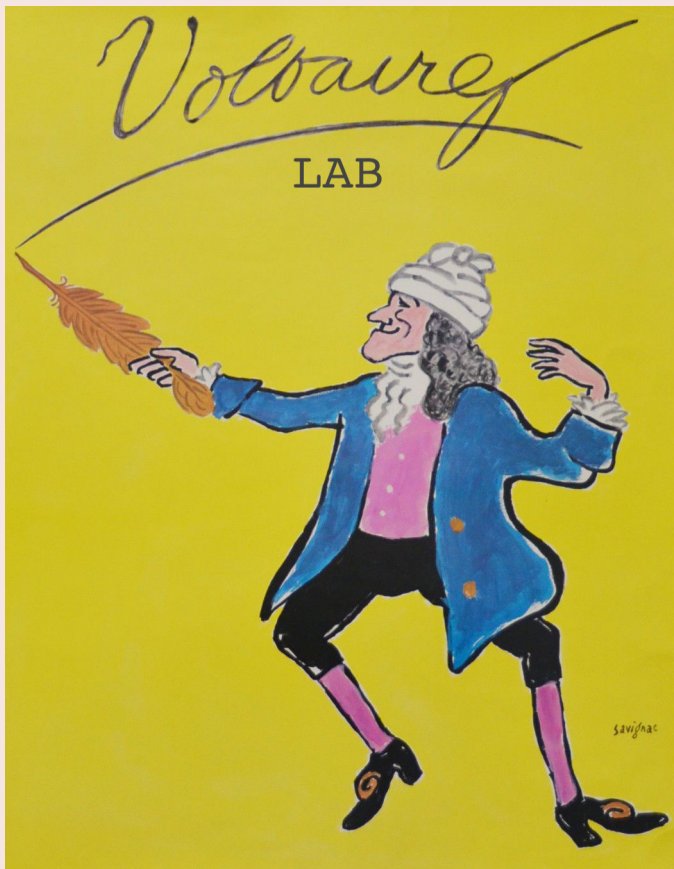
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#### The MLA committee's citation reads:

*Volume 145 of Les Œuvres complètes de Voltaire, dedicated to the notes and marginal writings of Voltaire, edited by Gillian Pink and a dozen other specialists, is one of the final volumes in a massive critical edition begun in 1968. The complete critical edition of Voltaire's works is a remarkable achievement, and this individual volume is a particular accomplishment, collecting marginalia from books owned and read by Voltaire that did not end up in St. Petersburg following Catherine II's purchase of his library after his death. Voltaire covered his books in notes and comments, often arguing with his opponents in the margins of their texts. But these marginalia can also show him to be a measured and open reader. Wonderfully and clearly edited, this erudite volume will serve scholars for generations to come.*

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## Voltaire Lab



Now in its fourth year of existence, the Voltaire Lab has established itself as 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. The Voltaire Lab's activities thus supplement and expand on the Voltaire Foundation's two flagship digital edition projects, *Digital Voltaire* and *Digital d'Holbach*.

The academic year 2020-21 saw the publication of the Voltaire Lab's first long-form research outcome, *Voltaire's Correspondence: Digital Readings*, authored by the Lab's co-directors Nicholas Cronk and Glenn Roe, and the inaugural book in the Eighteenth-Century Connections series of Cambridge University Press Elements. In keeping with the theme of correspondences, Voltaire's letters—provided by the Voltaire Lab—are one of the primary corpora for the ELICOM (éditer et lire des correspondances multidisciplinaires), constituting the Voltaire and Rousseau correspondences as well as the Ponge and Paulhan correspondences) project led by Glenn Roe and funded by the Sorbonne's

'Émergence' grant scheme for 2020/21. The end goal of the project is to produce a digital platform that will allow for the exploration of multiple correspondences across various periods and disciplines, including a specific interface for 18th-century letters.

The Voltaire Lab will continue its collaboration with the ObTIC (Observatoire des textes, des idées et de corpus – formerly the Labex OBVIL) team at the Sorbonne, including co-funded postdoctoral fellowships, the exchange of doctoral students and engineers, and the second Voltaire Hackathon to be held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France's new Data Lab.

After the first Voltaire Lab visiting fellowship of Clovis Gladstone in 2019, we invited James Gawley in 2020. James works on the automatic discovery of textual similarities. In particular, his research focuses on the transmission of ideas and sentences across linguistic boundaries. He studies allusions to the classical canon in French literature of the 17th and 18th centuries, in particular in Voltaire.





## Digital Voltaire



As the work on our printed critical edition nears completion, the Voltaire Foundation is re-imagining itself as a hub of digital enlightenment research in Oxford. Building on the expertise that we have established in state-of-the-art scholarly editing, we will become a leader in the production of digital scholarly editions.

During the year, work has been advancing on the digitisation of the volumes of the Complete works of Voltaire, and we expect the work on Digital Voltaire to be complete by the summer of 2023. The process does not aim simply to reproduce the printed edition, but involves the creation of a newly designed data model, that will enable us in due course the approach and remodel the information contained in the print edition in new and exciting ways.

As a supplement to *Digital Voltaire*, the **Voltaire Studio**, when it goes live, will contain additional and complementary digital material, both textual and visual. Work on this began in 2021 thanks to a grant from the Polonsky Foundation, enabling us to work on a recently discovered archive of hitherto unrecorded Voltaire manuscripts – more to report in a year's time!

## Digital d'Holbach

*Digital d'Holbach* is an international project to publish a born-digital scholarly edition of the complete works of Paul-Thiry d'Holbach, one of the most prominent philosophers in eighteenth-century Europe and a famously most intriguing and puzzling writer whose radical texts, all published either anonymously or pseudonymously, were influential in shaping our modern notions of democracy and civil rights. *Digital d'Holbach* is directed by Dr Ruggero Sciuto and was originally funded through a generous donation from the Andrew Mellon Foundation.



Since its start in October 2018, *Digital d'Holbach* has already achieved important results. In collaboration with colleagues at the University of Chicago, we released in March 2019 a fully searchable database of d'Holbach's complete works (*Tout d'Holbach*). At the moment, *Tout d'Holbach* only includes transcripts of d'Holbach's main philosophical works. Thanks to grants from the University of Oxford, the Leverhulme Trust, and St Edmund Hall, Oxford, we have been able to hire three research assistants to work on this project, and an updated version of the database containing almost the entirety of d'Holbach's numerous publications will therefore be released in November 2021.

As for *Digital d'Holbach* itself, two editions are well underway: the *Lettres à Eugénie*, edited by Dr Ruggero Sciuto, is an epistolary philosophical treatise that proposes women as active agents of social and religious change; while the *Contagion sacrée*, edited by Dr Laura Nicoli (Turin, Fondazione San Paolo) is a sharp anti-religious text published in 1768.

When complete, *Digital d'Holbach* will make a major contribution to the field of eighteenth-century studies: Not only will it offer a more nuanced and complex image of d'Holbach; it will also encourage a fundamental reconsideration of the nature of the so-called 'Radical Enlightenment' and help scholars gain a much better understanding of some of the main philosophical, religious, scientific, literary, and even musicological debates taking place in the second half of the eighteenth century.

# ***Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment***

**Professor Gregory Brown, General Editor**

With our publishing partner Liverpool University Press, we had another very successful year in which we published 12 monographs

Carole Dornier, *La Monarchie éclairée de l'abbé de Saint-Pierre: Une science politique des Modernes* (2020:11, ISBN 978-1-789-62222-5, 461 pages)

Junko Takeda, *Iran and a French empire of trade, 1700-1808: The other Persian letters* (2020:12, ISBN 978-1-789-62225-6, 292 pages)

Simon Davies, *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: Colonial Traveller, Enlightenment Reformer, Celebrity Writer* (2021:01, ISBN 978-1-789-62248-5, 372 pages)

Emmanuelle Chapron, *Livres d'école et littérature de jeunesse en France au XVIIIe siècle* (2021:02, ISBN 978-1-800-34803-5, 368 pages)

Jeffrey M. Leichman, Karine Bénac-Giroux (eds), *Colonialism and Slavery in Performance: Theatre and the Eighteenth-Century French Caribbean* (2021:03, ISBN 978-1-800-34804-2, 368 pages)

José Francisco Robles, *Polemics, Literature, and Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (2021:04, ISBN 978-1-800-34812-7, 384 pages)

Barbara Abrams, Mira Morgenstern, Karen Sullivan (eds), *Reframing Rousseau's Lévite d'Ephraïm: The Hebrew Bible, Hospitality, and Modern Identity* (2021:05, ISBN 978-1-800-34813-4, 256 pages)

Lauren R. Cannady, Jennifer Ferng (eds), *Crafting Enlightenment: Artisanal Histories and Transnational Networks* (2021:06, ISBN 978-1-800-34814-1, 416 pages)

Gianluca Mori, *Early Modern Atheism from Spinoza to d'Holbach* (2021:07, ISBN 978-1-800-34815-8, 368 pages)

Stéphane Jettot, Jean-Paul Zuñiga, *Genealogy and Social Status in the Enlightenment* (2021:08, ISBN 978-1-800-34856-1, 248 pages)

Cyrus Masroori, Whitney Mannies, John Christian Laursen (eds), *Persia and the Enlightenment* (2021:09, ISBN 978-1-800-34857-8, 288 pages)

Mauro Azzura, *Un philosophe des Lumières entre Naples et Paris: Ferdinando Galiani (1728-1787)* (2021:10, ISBN 978-1-800-85916-6, 270 pages)

Dr Kelsey Rubin-Detlev has won two international awards for her book *The Epistolary Art of Catherine the Great*:

- the *Alexander Nove Prize in Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Studies 2019* by the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES)
- the prize for '*Best First Book*' in 2020 by the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL).

***Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment:  
now fully available online***



*OSE Online* continues to be successful and was purchased by a number of libraries, many of them in the US, but also closer to home in France and Switzerland. Many libraries faced both budget cuts and increased demand for online-accessible materials during the pandemic, and we are proud to be able to offer this important resource to researchers.



## **Development Board**

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Professor Thomas Wynn, Durham University

\*attending



## Research Community



The Voltaire Foundation works with researchers and projects in Oxford as well as international institutions and colleagues. This year, we have launched the collaborative blog **Café Lumières** with our partner institute IZEA (Halle, Germany): <https://cafelumieres.voltaire.ox.ac.uk/>. The blog is looked after jointly by colleagues at the VF and IZEA, and is designed to provide a platform for researchers to present their work in progress, research projects, or reaching out to the wider research community with questions or thoughts for discussions.



In Oxford, we organised the online launch event for the Elizabeth Montagu Correspondence critical edition for our colleague Professor Nicole Pohl (Oxford Brookes) and her team of editors. We also supported our postdoctoral fellows Laura Nicolì and Ruggero Sciuto in organising an interview with Professor Alan Kors on the 250th anniversary of Baron d'Holbach's *Système de la nature* and our colleague Caroline Warman with an online interview about her most recent book *The Atheist's Bible: Diderot's Eléments de physiologie*.

We also hosted a roundtable discussion about best practices for digital critical editions of letters, and brought together colleagues across faculties who are working on digital correspondence editions.

## Academic Events



While the pandemic made events challenging to organise, we had considerable success moving our events online. The annual **Besterman Lecture** was given by William Doyle on the topic 'Who were the French revolutionaries?'. The lecture was livestreamed to an audience of close to 900 viewers on 19 November and subsequently made available on YouTube, where it can still be watched: [https://youtu.be/6slDuodUd\\_0](https://youtu.be/6slDuodUd_0)



SCAN ME

For the **Enlightenment Workshop**, we created a new format. Rather than having guest speakers giving a paper, we invited a panel of respondents to converse with the authors of recently published books in Enlightenment Studies. The conversations were likewise livestreamed and made available to watch afterwards. The full list of

books and discussions can be found on our website, with links to the video recordings: <https://www.voltaire.ox.ac.uk/home/research-community/enlightenment-workshop/>

We were delighted to take part in the **Oxford Lieder Festival 2020**, with Avi Lifschitz speaking on Mendelssohn and the Jewish Enlightenment, and Nicholas Cronk on Voltaire, Rousseau and the Enlightenment. The festival moved online as well, enabling a large audience to enjoy the performances of their exceptional musicians. Both videos can be watched on YouTube, please follow the links or the QR codes.



SCAN ME



SCAN ME