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Jean-Benoît Krumenacker

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Buying paper for the consulate: Insights into the paper trade of Lyon, 1450-1525

Jean-Benoît Krumenacker

This chapter will explore the ‘usual dealings’ of paper through a case study of the networks and practices of the Lyon paper trade at the very beginning of the early modern period. In these decades, the paper trade was radically altered by the appearance of printing, which required many sheets of paper¹. Administrations are regular consumers of paper and often kept and stored records of their consumption. The study of accounting documents makes it possible to identify and to study sales networks in the city, as goods moved between stationers – and sometimes even papermakers – to customers. These ‘usual dealings’ of the paper trade highlight the social and business activities of some of the intermediaries in this paper industry. These accounting documents also reveal the specificities of these transactions, such as the purchase price, quantity, etc., and their evolution in the second half of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century.

In the sixteenth century, the city of Lyon became one of the printing centres of Europe, and eventually developed into a paper-purchasing and paper-consuming city. During the Middle Ages, Lyon was one of the major cities in the Rhône Valley. A part of the Holy Roman Empire since the division of Charlemagne’s empire, the city was annexed by the kingdom of France at the beginning of the fourteenth century. At the end of the Middle Ages, Lyon was one

¹ In direct connection with printing and a few decades after the period studied in this chapter, we can see for Paris: Annie Parent, *Les métiers du livre à Paris au XVI^e siècle (1535-1560)* (Genève: Droz, 1974), p. 55-67.

of the most important cities in the kingdom, with about 30,000 inhabitants.² The end of the Hundred Years' War brought prosperity to France as French kings brought European trade back within their borders. Located [p. 198] on the border of the kingdom and on the roads between southern and northern Europe, Lyon once again became an important trading centre. The re-establishment of fairs in the second half of the fifteenth century made the city one of the largest centres of European trade. Merchants and bankers from all over the continent came together in Lyon to exchange credit and a wide variety of goods. During the Renaissance, according to a Venetian ambassador, Lyon was "il fondamento del danaro di tutta Italia e buona parte di Spagna e Fiandra".³ At that time, one third of the Kingdom of France's imports came in through Lyon⁴, and many enterprises were financed there, such as Verrazano's travels to the Americas in 1523, during which he discovered the location of the future city of New York (*La Nouvelle-Angoulême*).⁵ This prosperity allowed the city to quickly become one of the major printing centres in Europe after Venice and Paris.⁶

One of the regular purchasers of paper in Lyon was the consulate. The consulate forms the urban government of the city. Its 12 members, belonging to the city's patriciate, were elected for one year initially and then, after 1447, for two years.⁷ The consulate ran a small administration, which included a secretary, a treasurer and some officers, and meets in a city hall where its archives are also located⁸. In addition to the regular administration of the city, the

² André Pelletier, Jacques Rossiaud, Françoise Bayard, Pierre Cayez, *Histoire de Lyon des origines à nos jours* (Lyon: ELAH, 2007), p. 255. For the history of Lyon, see also: André Latreille, *Histoire de Lyon et du Lyonnais* (Toulouse: Privat, 1975); André Pelletier and Jacques Rossiaud *Histoire de Lyon : des origines à nos jours* (Le Coteau: Horvath, 1990); Patrice Beghain, Bruno Benoit, Gérard Corneloup and Bruno Thevenon (dir.), *Dictionnaire historique de Lyon* (Lyon: Bachès, 2009); Susanne Rau, *Räume der Stadt : eine Geschichte Lyons 1300-1800* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2014).

³ Niccolò Tommaseo, *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens sur les affaires de France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: imprimerie royale, 1838), p. 36.

⁴ Pelletier, Rossiaud, Bayard, Cayez, *Histoire de Lyon*, p. 267.

⁵ Pelletier, Rossiaud, Bayard, Cayez, *Histoire de Lyon*, p. 266.

⁶ Pelletier, Rossiaud, Bayard, Cayez, *Histoire de Lyon*, p. 269. On Lyon as printing-city, see: Anatole Claudin, *Histoire de l'imprimerie en France au XV^e et au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1900-1914); Henri Baudrier, *Bibliographie lyonnaise. Recherches sur les imprimeurs, libraires, relieurs et fondeurs de lettres de Lyon au XVI^e siècle* (Lyon: A. Brun, 1895-1921); Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Le monde de l'imprimerie humaniste : Lyon', in *Histoire de l'édition française* (Paris: Promodis, 1983); Dominique Varry, 'Lyons' printers and booksellers from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century', in Malcolm Gee and Tim Kirk (ed.), *Printed Matters. Printing, Publishing and Urban Culture in Europe in the Modern Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 30-47.

⁷ Elections were still held every year in December, but only half of the consulate was renewed (Caroline Fargeix, *Les élites lyonnaises du XV^e siècle au miroir de leur langage : pratiques et représentations culturelles des conseillers de Lyon, d'après les registres de délibérations consulaires* (Paris: De Boccard, 2007), pp. 268-269).

⁸ On the Lyon bourgeoisie and its exercise of power by the consulate: Caroline Fargeix, *Les élites lyonnaises du XV^e siècle au miroir de leur langage : pratiques et représentations culturelles des conseillers de Lyon, d'après les registres de délibérations consulaires* (Paris: De Boccard, 2007).

consulate has a tax role and must regularly raise taxes for the king. It also maintains relations with the king, the royal administration, other cities in France and abroad and with foreign principalities. Thus, paper has many uses, including but not limited to: the drawing up of consular acts [p.199], the composition of tax registers, letters, memorandums for trials, drafts and recording taxes collected. The demand for paper in such an important city was, therefore, high in the late Middle Ages, just as it is today.⁹

The consulate was a relatively new institution. Unlike in the Italian republics or other cities in France, the urban bourgeoisie in Lyon were slow to come together. It was the archbishop who managed to regain power over the city and county of Lyon during the Middle Ages. After fighting the count of Forez who claimed to own the city, the archbishop received a Golden Bull from Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in 1157 which granted the Church of Lyon all the *regalia* over the city and its countryside. The bourgeoisie tried to create a *commune* to manage their own affairs, but they had a long conflict with the Church. However, after the Albigensian Crusade, the French royalty took an interest in the south of France and wanted to control the Rhône Valley. The kings of France therefore supported the bourgeoisie of Lyon and annexed the city by force under the pretext of defending it against the archbishop. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the archbishop of Lyon, Peter of Savoy, had to recognize himself as a vassal of the King of France, and the city was granted a municipal charter in 1320 (*Charte Sapaudine*). The consulate then took charge of the economic and social life of the city. For the management of the city's common affairs, paper was therefore a particular necessity.

⁹ On the use of paper by administrations: Alfred Nadler, 'Die Papierbezugsquellen der freien Reichsstadt Schweinfurt (1550–1750)', in *Miscellanea Suinfurtensia Historica IV* (Schweinfurt: Veröffentlichungen des Historischen Vereins und des Stadtarchivs Schweinfurts, 1964), p. 93–118; Megan Williams, '„Zu Notdurfft der Schreiberey“. Die Einrichtung der frühneuzeitlichen Kanzlei', in Dagmar Freist (ed.), *Diskurse, Körper, Artefakte. Historische Praxeologie in der Frühneuzeitforschung* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), p. 335–372; Paul M. Dover (ed.), *Secretaries and Statecraft in the Early Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2016); Randolph C. Head, 'Early Modern Archivality. Organised Records, Information, and State Power, c. 1500', in Liesbeth Corens, Kate Peters and Alexandra Walsham (ed.), *Archives & information in the early modern world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 29–51; Arnold Hunt, 'The Early Modern secretary and the early modern Archive', in Liesbeth Corens, Kate Peters and Alexandra Walsham (ed.), *Archives & information in the early modern world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 105–130.

This chapter builds on the rich accounts of the Consulate of Lyon from 1450 to 1525 at the municipal archives of Lyon.¹⁰ It is the aim of the chapter and [p. 200] this case study to address and highlight in detail the practices of purchasing paper from paper traders. In doing so, the business network activities of selling paper to the markets of administrations all over Europe become visible, and more insights into the material story of the commodity paper - a commodity bought and sold as a sold and bought good in a range of different qualities and limited availability are- are established.

Evidence of purchasing paper in the consulate archives

The consulate's accounts keep track of paper purchases. This is not surprising since paper was essential for the functioning of the consulate. On the other hand, what is surprising is that the purchase of paper does not correspond to the total consumption of paper. It is therefore not possible to have a complete picture of the paper purchased by the consulate and one may wonder why some purchases are recorded and others not.

The city's general accounts, which include all income and expenditures, do not include any record explicitly detailing the purchase of paper. These purchases are probably hidden in a record of extraordinary expenses or common operating expenses. However, there are paper purchases listed in the supporting documents for expenses that accompany the accounts. These

¹⁰ Archives municipales de Lyon (AML), CC 399-734. Partly, these accounts have been published by Tania Levy as part of her doctoral thesis on Lyon painters during the same time period (Tania Levy, « *Mystères* » et « *joyeusetés* » : *les peintres de Lyon autour de 1500* (Thèse de doctorat: Université Paris IV, 2013), vol. 2.). Fortunately, Lyon has kept many documents concerning the administration of the city by the consulate since medieval times. The archives now hold a large part of the accounting documents produced since the fourteenth century. Although it contains important and complete information on the administration and finances of a major city, this trove of documents has not been studied much to date. For almost every year at the end of the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, the archives contains not only general accounts of the city but also special accounts (salaries, works, war expenses, extraordinary expenses., etc.) and supporting documents for expenses, all together, hundreds of archive documents representing hundreds of folios for each year.

records are sometimes invoices or receipts, but most of the time, consist of a book of small expenses (*menues dépenses extraordinaires*) recorded by the treasurer for each year.

There are several interesting things to note. First, there are no records of paper purchases between 1450 and 1474. After this, such purchases are recorded only irregularly and there are many years without any records of paper purchases. For purchases of plain paper between 1450 and 1525, which we equate here with paper purchased per ream (see p. X below), there are 53 records corresponding to 63 reams (31,500 sheets).¹¹ This number is important but does [p. 201] not correspond to the total amount of paper consumed by the consulate at that time. The volume of paper on which the consulate's archive survives suggests the consumption of well over one ream per year. Despite this, the archive suggests that, in some years, the consulate purchased no paper.

Nevertheless, we still have an extremely important document: an invoice from a stationer who delivered a ream of paper to the city almost every month between May and September 1517.¹² Extrapolating from the delivery dates indicated on this invoice, it can be deduced that the consulate consumed approximately 5,300 sheets of paper per year, or almost 400,000 sheets in 75 years. If this figure is correct for the period of 1450-1525, we only have proof of 8% of paper purchases.¹³ These figures seem more in line with the actual activity of the consulate. The question arises: why is it that only a small part of paper expenditure is recorded in the accounts? And how are these expenses – in total representing several *livres*

¹¹ For a 500-sheet ream of paper as is the norm today. But it is not certain that the quire makes 25 sheets in the Middle Ages as it does today. Carla Bozzolo and Ezio Ornato suggest that there were only twenty-four sheets originally which makes a 480-sheet ream (Carla Bozzolo, Ezio Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge* (Paris: CNRS, 1980), p. 34). This value is attested in modern times and seems to persist, particularly in Switzerland and the Netherlands, at least until the 19th century. The difference between these two definitions does not really have an impact here.

¹² AML, CC652, n°32. This invoice is particularly important because it is the only one from a papermaker who indicates that he delivered a ream of paper on May 15, June 9, August 7 and September 5. Other proofs of purchase are account lines from the treasurer's hand.

¹³ 11% for the period 1474-1525 since there is no previous mention.

tournois per year¹⁴ – justified? This is especially puzzling since there are many extremely diverse expenses, often of low price, recorded in these accounts, including fish, candles, ropes and wine¹⁵.

It is possible that the references in the accounts only concern additional extraordinary purchases and that a current regular [?] expenditure on paper, such as that detailed in the 1517 invoice, is not included; or, if it is, recorded in an unknown item in the accounts. The volume of paper used could indeed vary according to the needs of the moment, for example when repairing tax registers. The invoice of 1517 is also singular and probably indicative of a supply contract, since there was a single payment for all the paper delivered for a period of four months. In contrast, other purchases are paid individually and immediately. About 10% of paper purchases would therefore be made in addition to the regular supply suggested by the 1517 invoice. The total absence of proof of purchase before 1474 is more difficult to explain. The coincidence with the arrival of printing in Lyon in 1472 or 1473¹⁶ is remarkable and may provide an explanation related to problems of price and availability of paper; we return to this (see p. X below).

[p. 202]

One of the problems with these records of paper purchase is that the type of paper is rarely specified (for example: “*Pour une rame de papier pour escrire et service en lostel de ladicte ville*”). In the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there were various types of paper available. Sometimes we have only a simple reference to ‘paper’. Often, however, we also have a unit of measurement (sheet, quire, ream). Adjectives are sometimes included: large paper, white paper, Lombardy paper, cardboard paper etc. For these different types of paper, prices

¹⁴ The invoice for five months of paper delivery mentioned above corresponds to about 15 days' salary for a simple worker.

¹⁵ Most of these small expenses correspond to a few *sols tournois*, i.e. less than a ream of paper.

¹⁶ The traditional date of the first book printed in Lyon is September 1473 but we have shown in our thesis that this date can be receded to the beginning of 1473 or 1472: Jean-Benoît Krumenacker, *Du manuscrit à l'imprimé: la révolution du livre à Lyon* (Thèse de doctorat, Université de Lyon, 2019), p. 330.

vary greatly. We sometimes find purchases of 10-*sols* quires (25 sheets) of paper¹⁷ while we also find reams (500 sheets) for the same price. Nevertheless, there is a consistency in price and appellation for a large number of purchases made per ream. These almost certainly correspond to the plain paper commonly used by the consulate. Moreover, these are purchases at the lowest unit of price. On the contrary, purchases made by quire are generally much more expensive per unit. For an administration such as the consulate, which consumed a lot of paper, it was logical to buy plain paper per ream and to buy only small quantities of more specific papers. Therefore, especially for the next section, we hereafter consider plain paper to be that which is bought per ream in price ranges¹⁸ similar to that of other purchases per ream. It represents the majority of purchases and mentions records of sellers, but we should also remember that the consulate bought other types of paper. We sometimes see larger sizes purchased for writing but paper could also be used for drawings, or even for decorations during royal entries¹⁹.

The price of paper

In these proofs of purchase, we sometimes have the name of the seller, the volume purchased or details about the paper, but the element that is always present is, logically, the price paid. We can thus follow the evolution of the price of the ream of plain paper in Lyon (see Fig. 1 below).

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¹⁷ For example, in November 1470, half a quire of paper was paid for 6 *sols* 11 *deniers* (AML, CC441, n°18).

¹⁸ This price range, ranging from around 7 to 16 *sols tournois* per ream, corresponds both to the lowest unit prices and to the prices corresponding to bulk purchases.

¹⁹ The royal entrances were designed as theatrical scenes and were an opportunity to create sets painted by several of the greatest Lyon painters of the time. These sets were erected in the streets of the city, where the royal procession passed through. For royal entrances to Lyon during the Renaissance, see: Tania Lévy, *Les peintres de Lyon autour de 1500* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2017).



Fig 1: Price of a ream of paper in Lyon between 1470 and 1525

The general trend was marked by a sharp increase between 1475 and 1490, with paper prices doubling from around 8 *sols* to 16 *sols* 4 *deniers tournois*. The price then slowly decreased by about 25% to 12 *sols* 6 *deniers*. This extremely detailed analysis of the evolution of prices in Lyon is quite remarkable insofar as the estimates generally included in French historiography are based on only about 30 very different references between 1342 and 1502,²⁰ which indicate that the price of paper fell overall during the Middle Ages. Here, we can see this decline ending abruptly. The reason for this price surge is almost certainly the arrival of printing (in 1472 or 1473, see above). The new printing industry consumed great quantities of paper²¹ and certainly created strong high demand that drove up prices. If we superimpose the printing production in Lyon²² onto the price of paper, we find quite similar evolutions (see Fig. 2 below).

²⁰ Bozzolo, Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge*, pp. 35-36 (table C and C').

²¹ The majority of the first editions in Lyon are in-folios, which have an average of one hundred sheets per copy (Krumenacker, *Du manuscrit à l'imprimé*, pp. 645-652). A print run of 300 copies then corresponds to about 60 reams of paper. However, Lyon's printers quickly produce several dozen editions per year.

²² Krumenacker, *Du manuscrit à l'imprimé*, pp. 369-370.

The sharp increase in the price of paper corresponds to the taking off of publishing in Lyon around 1476. The price increased sharply again around 1485 when the printing industry experienced a strong boom. The decline in paper prices also follows printing recessions, but unlike the increases, the effects are only felt a few years later. Thus, the price fell about four years after the crisis observed in the Lyon printing industry after 1489 and about five years after the crisis that followed 1500. This price decrease with a certain delay is common in the market economy, as the product can be stored if the market becomes less tight. This storage possibility allows the paper industry to avoid a shortage when printers' activity resumes after these crises. Consequently, the price of paper does not increase again at the time of these recoveries. Finally, the increase in paper production also makes it possible to limit or even avoid price increases when printed production is growing more slowly.

[p. 204]



Fig. 2: Evolution of the price of paper compared to that of printed production in Lyon between 1470 and 1520

It can be assumed that, in response to this demand, paper production increased, which made it possible to stabilise prices and then slowly reduce them after a few years of inflation. Several of Lyon's neighbouring regions such as Auvergne and Beaujolais are paper production areas, which made it possible to quickly adjust supply and demand. As Henri-Jean Martin writes, the success of the printing industry fostered the development of the paper industry.²³ The influence of the arrival of printing is therefore clearly marked in the sharp rise in the price of its main raw material. The price only reflects the problems of adjustment between print and paper production and characterizes a situation of relative scarcity.

This lack of paper in Lyon is most likely also attested by a publishing contract signed in 1504.²⁴ In this contract, the printer, Jacques Sacon, received part of his salary in paper. The publisher provides the paper necessary for printing, but for each sheet printed, he gave a second one to the printer. This clause is unique among the few publishing contracts known in Europe during the [p. 205] first decades of printing. Unfortunately, this contract is the only one known for Lyon at that time, and it is difficult to know whether such an arrangement was common in that city. The fact that the printer requested paper in addition to the current edition, probably for his own use, indicates that it must have been difficult for a small entrepreneur to obtain sufficient quantities of paper for his own activity. There is indeed a social difference between a publisher, who was generally wealthy and had extensive business relations, and a printer, who was a craftsman. Composed of wealthy influential burghers, the consulate probably did not have much difficulty in acquiring paper but had to do so at a price corresponding to this situation of deprivation.

²³ Lucien Febvre, Henri-Jean Martin, *L'apparition du livre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999), pp. 56-58.

²⁴ 4 March 1504 (Archives départementales du Rhône, 23J22 (fonds Chartron)). Document transcribed in: Jeanne-Marie Dureau-Lapeyssonie, 'Recherches sur les grandes compagnies de libraires lyonnais au XVI^e siècle', in Roger Chartier, *Nouvelles études lyonnaises* (Genève: Droz, 1969), pp. 15-16.

It can be noted that the price of paper in Lyon before the arrival of printing, about 8 *sols tournois*, is much lower than the estimate generally given on the basis of examples from northern France. Carla Bozzolo and Ezio Ornato estimated the price of a ream of paper between 1461 and 1502 at about 11 *sols parisis* (=13.75 *sols tournois*),²⁵ based on the Viscount of Avenel's statements for Orléans paper.²⁶ This difference may explain the success of printing in Lyon. Indeed, the price of paper was the primary cost of an edition²⁷ and may have been an important element in the competition between printers in Europe.

It can also be observed that these paper prices generally fall back to their earlier rates. The vast majority correspond to the three most common amounts : 12 *sols 6 deniers*, 15 *sols* and 16 *sols 3 deniers*. The setting of this price probably reflects a logic that makes it possible to fall back on these values and not on others for a relatively long time. The accounting of the Lyon Consulate is always done in *livres-sols-deniers tournois*, the unit of account used in France in the Middle Ages. But in the accompanying documents such as the expense receipts, there are other units. The most common is another unit of account used locally: the *gros*, which corresponds to 1 *sol 3 deniers tournois*. In this new unit, the three values mentioned above become exactly: 10 *gros*, 12 *gros* and 13 *gros*, respectively. More rarely, there is also a price of 7 *gros* (8 *sols 9 deniers*) several times around 1475, a price of 8 *gros* (10 *sols*) once in 1524 and a price of 9 *gros* (11 *sols 3 deniers*) also once in 1523. These coincidences make it possible to ascertain that the paper trade was not thought of in *livres tournois* or in current currency but in the local unit of account. The price of paper was therefore fixed by a whole number in *gros*, fluctuating according to demand [p. 206], and then converted into *sols* and *deniers*. This illustrates the local character of this business in Lyon.

²⁵ Bozzolo, Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge*, p. 35.

²⁶ Georges d'Avenel, *Histoire économique de la propriété, des salaires, des denrées et de tous les prix en général depuis l'an 1200 jusqu'en l'an 1800* (Paris: Leroux, 1926), vol. VII, pp. 359-360.

²⁷ Febvre, Martin, *L'apparition du livre*, p. 172.

We can see that the price of a ream of common paper, which by the end of the Middle Ages in Lyon stood at around 7 *gros* after several centuries of decrease, was destabilized by the arrival of a new industry that had a great need for this material. In 1476, the price rose rapidly to 10 and then 13 *gros* before slowly decreasing to 10 *gros* around 1505, a price 50% higher than it had been 20 years earlier. The consulate's accounts are therefore a particularly useful witness to the effect of the arrival of printing in European cities at the end of the fifteenth century. Having such a detailed and consistent set of price data from the same source is an extraordinary asset for visualizing rapid changes that break major trends. Like other paper users in Lyon, the consulate was an indirect victim of the arrival of the printing press, which drove up prices. The Consulate's documents provide enlightening insights into these changes.

Buyers and sellers

In a study of paper-trading networks, the people involved in the transactions should be explored. Unfortunately, we very rarely have details of who was involved in this trade. Who kept the accounts of the consulate is known, but the person to whom the expenses are purchased or paid is rarely mentioned. To complicate the matter, some expenses were advanced by consuls or members of the Lyon patriciate and then reimbursed by the treasurer. In this case, the person paid by the consulate was not – directly – the seller.

The treasurers of the consulate are well known. Since the city's administration was small, the treasurer dealt directly with all budgetary matters and ordered expenditures alone. It can therefore be assumed that they were the ones who dealt directly with the sellers when purchasing paper. In 75 years, twelve treasurers succeeded one another in the service of the Lyon Consulate: Rolin Guérin (1445-1458), Gilet de Chaveyria (1458-1466), Mathurin Beuget (1466-1469), Jean Girard (1469-1472), Barthélémy Berthet (1472-1475), Alardin Varinier (1475-1483), Guillaume Dublet (1483-1493), Jacques de Baileux (1493-1516), Philippe de

Villars (1516-1518), Véran Chalendat (1518-1522), Claude Grolier (1522-1523) and Charles de la Bessée (1523-1530).²⁸ Most treasurers remained in this position for only a few years. Jacques de Baileux is an exception, serving in this position for more than 20 years. These treasurers [p. 207] were wealthy citizens of Lyon. Some belonged to the city's patriciate and had obtained consul mandates (Guérin, Chaveyria, Berthet, Varinier, Dublet, Villars). They were employees of the consulate but with great freedom in the management of funds for public affairs and for the proper functioning of the consulate. They had a certain power and after years in this position, Jacques de Baileux was considered as almost a thirteenth consul of the city²⁹.

Paper sellers, however, are less well known. As previously mentioned, only a small proportion of paper purchases are recorded in the consulate's archive. Even for purchases for which records were kept, the name of the seller was not always given. This means that in the vast majority of cases, it is impossible to know who sold paper to the consulate in Lyon. Nevertheless, some information can be obtained from the data available.

The accounts provide twelve different names with variable occurrences (in total, 43 records that cite the seller's name):³⁰ François de Rivoire (10 purchases between 1473 and 1482), Jean de Bourges (2 purchases in 1475), Pierre Bataillier (2 purchases in 1477 and 1478), Guillaume d'Arras (4 purchases between 1480 and 1483), Jean Rozet (5 purchases between 1488 and 1492), Buysson (1 purchase in 1499), Jean Picory alias d'Angier (2 purchases in 1499 and 1507), Jean de Toulouse (13 purchases between 1507 and 1520), Mathieu Ravillon (1 purchase in 1523), Philippe Gallan (1 purchase in 1523), Nicolas Perrin (1 purchase in 1523) and Henri Saurret (1 purchase in 1525).

The royal entries accounts provide eight names,³¹ six of which do not appear in the general accounts: Jean Prevost, Jean de Paris, André (in 1494 too) and Guigue de la Nef in

²⁸ The list of treasurers from 1445 to 1522 was published in: Fargeix, *Les élites lyonnaises*, p. 539.

²⁹ Fargeix, *Les élites lyonnaises*, p.60.

³⁰ AML, CC441, 457, 484, 485, 486, 518, 519, 543, 577, 583, 604, 612, 620, 626, 652, 686, 721, and 734.

³¹ AML, CC511, 527, 575 and 666.

1489, Ame Veysse in 1494 and Pierre Chevrier in 1515. They also include Jean de Toulouse in 1507 and Nicolas Perrin in 1515.

Two of these sellers are explicitly designated as foreigners: Buysson, papermaker of Auvergne, and Mathieu Ravillon, papermaker of Ambert. Ambert is a city in Auvergne, about a hundred kilometres east of Lyon, which had a papermaking industry since the fifteenth century. Ambert's paper has been noted for its quality in modern times.³² Auvergne is well known as a paper-producing region that supplied the neighbouring city of Lyon. We have here direct evidence for this relationship at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century. But these two papermakers only appear once in the Lyon accounts. We can assume that these were manufacturers who came [p. 208] to Lyon temporarily to sell their paper, probably at markets or fairs. Lyon was at that time the major city in the region, and the importance of printing in this city made it a market where paper stocks could be easily sold. The transaction with Mathieu Ravillon is the only one where the price of the ream is 8 *gros*, although the price otherwise was 10 *gros* at that time. The direct sale with the producer and therefore the absence of an intermediary may explain this price difference. It can be assumed that the arrival of papermakers from Auvergne in Lyon meant that paper was temporarily available at a lower price than that of Lyon's retailers. But these papermakers from Auvergne were certainly not the usual sellers to the consulate or inhabitants of Lyon during the Renaissance, but rather occasional traders.

The accounts do not provide much information about the other paper-sellers. Jean de Toulouse is indicated as a stationer and Jean Rozet as an apothecary. In the accounts concerning the royal entries, Ame Veysse is also listed as an apothecary while André and Pierre Chevrier are playing-card makers (*cartiers*). At that time, Lyon was, along with Rouen, the largest French centre for the production of playing cards. But the paper provided by these playing-card makers

³² Diderot's famous *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772) was printed on Ambert paper.

was probably more like cardboard than plain paper. The names of Jean Prevost and Jean de Paris are well known, especially in the context of the preparation for the royal entries in Lyon. Jean de Paris was known rather as Jean Perréal, one of the greatest Renaissance artists in Lyon, official painter of the kings of France and an illuminator. Jean Prevost³³ was the official painter of the Lyon Cathedral Chapter.

Fortunately, the city's archives also include tax registers that list all Lyon taxpayers and in which some of the names of paper sellers can be found. We have such registers for 1493 and 1515.³⁴ Unfortunately, neither is complete: in 1493, for example, we do not have the notebook with taxpayers whose first name begins with J. Lyon residents are arranged more or less according to the initial of their first name. But homonyms or variations in the spelling of names sometimes makes it difficult to identify people with certainty. Despite these shortcomings, these registers are an excellent tool for learning more about the people of Lyon at that time. For each taxpayer, the registers often give information including profession, address, and wealth.³⁵ Other documents of the [p. 209] consulate also provide some other information on some Lyon residents. In total, we found the names of about half of the paper vendors listed above.

The professional affiliations of these paper merchants are quite diverse. The majority are described as apothecaries and belonged to the wealthier classes of society. Guillaume d'Arras³⁶ was the master of the corporation of grocers³⁷ in 1472, 1477, 1480, 1484, 1484, 1491 and 1495 and became a consul in 1506³⁸. He lived in the heart of the city and had a large fortune.

³³ Jean Prevost has sometimes been identified with the Master of Moulins (Albert Châtelet, *Jean Prévost, le Maître de Moulins* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001)) but specialists reject this identification today (Philippe Lorentz, "Jean Hey", in Pascale Charron and Jean-Marie Guillouët (dir.), *Dictionnaire d'histoire de l'art du Moyen âge occidental* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2009).

³⁴ CC4-12 for 1493; CC20-23 for 1515.

³⁵ Wealth indicators are relative. To keep the real wealth of the city secret, tax registers give arbitrary values in relation to a given reference. It is estimated that this leads to an underestimation of assets by at least 25% (Jean Deniau, *Les nommées des habitants de Lyon en 1446* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1930), pp. 42-43). The following set of data should therefore not be taken literally but as a means of comparing the status of individuals.

³⁶ AML, CC10, f° 22.

³⁷ The consulate appoints two officers each year for each corporation. Apothecaries are part of the corporation of grocers.

³⁸ Fargeix, *Les élites lyonnaises*, p. 580.

He owned three and a half houses and a vineyard of about one hectare in Lyon. His possessions are estimated at just over 892 *livres tournois*, 400 for movable property and the rest for real estate. Jean Rozet³⁹ was also an apothecary, slightly less well-off than Guillaume d'Arras but nevertheless wealthy. He owned a house worth 400 *livres* and movable property estimated at 200 *livres*. We do not have the tax base of François de Rivoire's tax base, another grocer and apothecary, but he was, like Guillaume d'Arras, master of the corporation of grocers in 1476, 1479, 1482, 1485 and 1489 and consul in 1485-1486.⁴⁰ Ame Veysse⁴¹ was probably the wealthiest of our paper merchants. He was designated as a merchant, grocer and apothecary. He owned three houses in Lyon; one house with courtyard and gardens, several hectares of vineyard and other land in Saint-Genis-Laval;⁴² and houses, a vineyard and other land in another village.⁴³ He also had 15 pensions and movable property estimated at 200 *livres*. His total tax base amounted to 1058 *livres*. Nicolas Perrin⁴⁴ was also an apothecary, but of modest wealth. He owned neither a house nor land, and his tax base consisted only of movable property estimated at 100 *livres*. This was also the case of the apothecary Philippe Gallan⁴⁵ who had only movable property estimated at 100 *livres*.

Beyond apothecaries, other professions are also represented. Jean de Toulouse⁴⁶ was a stationer who owned a house in Lyon worth 115 *livres* as well [p. 210] as a house, a vineyard of about four hectares and land in Brignais⁴⁷ worth a total of 147 *livres*. His movable property was estimated at 120 *livres*. Pierre Bataillier⁴⁸ was a copyist who owned a house worth 56 *livres*

³⁹ AML, CC21, f° 102.

⁴⁰ Fargeix, *Les élites lyonnaises*, p. 596.

⁴¹ AML, CC9, f° 17-19.

⁴² A village less than 10 km south of Lyon.

⁴³ Maybe Cherrin, in Bourgogne, 170 km northwest of Lyon?

⁴⁴ AML, CC22, f° 408.

⁴⁵ AML, CC23, f° 178.

⁴⁶ AML, CC21, f° 108.

⁴⁷ A village 10 kilometres south of Lyon.

⁴⁸ AML, CC12, f° 196.

but on which a pension weighed, reducing its value to 5 *livres*. His movable property was valued at 25 *livres*, giving a tax base of 30 *livres*.

As points of comparison to situate these men socially, the vast majority of Lyon's taxpayers had tax bases similar to those of Nicolas Perrin, Philippe Gallan or Pierre Bataillier, which corresponds to the wealth of a master craftsman. On the contrary, our other apothecaries had a fortune comparable to the wealthy merchants, and those who approached 1000 *livres* of value were among the richest in Lyon.

In considering their activities, paper sellers can be divided into three groups. One is formed by Jean de Toulouse who is the only seller whose main activity was paper.⁴⁹ A second group consists of those for whom the paper trade was an ancillary activity; this is the case of apothecaries and grocers. Finally, for the third group the paper trade was a spin-off activity; this is the case for copyists, painters or card makers who needed paper for their own activities. But not all these actors are of the same importance. The number of paper purchases by the consulate from each of these vendors is very variable, as noted above. For example, Ame Veysse appears only once to sell a particular item for the king's entry – Lombardy paper – but is not found in common paper sales.

It was also noted that the consulate probably had a usual way of purchasing paper, which was not found in the accounts, and a more unusual way. The question may therefore arise as to whether the consulate used the same vendors in both cases. And even for the usual purchase, if it was always the same seller during a given period. The 1517 invoice mentioned above records a purchase of paper from Jean de Toulouse. We can also see that between 1507 and 1520, he was the only seller from whom the consulate bought paper. Therefore it can be assumed that,

⁴⁹ Jean de Toulouse is listed as a *papetier*. Buysson and Mathieu Ravillon are also referred to as such. But the word *papetier* in French means both papermaker and stationer. Jean being in Lyon, he cannot be a papermaker. Buysson and Mathieu Ravillon may be both, but they are not based in Lyon.

during this period, he was the official supplier of common paper to the consulate. Since paper was the core of his profession, unlike the apothecaries, he certainly always had stock and was the most frequent source of paper. Before 1507, the situation seems more complex. We have important sellers, like François de Rivoire, Guillaume d'Arras or Jean Rozet, all apothecaries, but there does not seem to be any real exclusivity [p. 211] towards a seller. Perhaps they were not able to provide the consulate with paper on every occasion, and other vendors were approached. In this way, other apothecaries, even copyists, were able to help the consulate by providing paper. However, the dates show no real correlation between the treasurer and the paper seller. Thus, it is not possible to show that a treasurer would favour a seller, suggesting the purchase was motivated by availability and demand only.

In any case, we can attest that at the end of the fifteenth century, the paper trade was dominated by the grocers and apothecaries. This can be seen in Lyon with the preponderant and almost exclusive presence of these professions as paper suppliers in the consulate archives. Those who do not belong to this profession sell paper only on a very occasional basis and appear to have a paper supply for the needs of their own activity. This paper-retail business probably could not have been an exclusive activity for long. Around 1500 in Lyon, the annual income of a small master craftsman was about 50 *livres*.⁵⁰ With the price of a ream of paper at 7 *gros*, assuming a margin of 10%, 1142 reams of paper would have to be sold per year to make a profit of 50 *livres*. Before the arrival of printing, it is not certain that such a volume could be sold in a city like Lyon. Of course, these figures can be only very approximate extrapolations, but they give a minimal order of magnitude. It is not insignificant that Jean de Toulouse is the only stationer, whereas there are many apothecaries recorded as selling paper to the consulate. There are dozens of apothecaries in the tax registers, but we have not found any others considered to

⁵⁰ In fact, rather 80 *livres* on average for master craftsmen. A simple worker was paid daily 3 *sols* 4 *deniers* by the city which represents about 40 *livres* per year.

be stationers. The sale of paper alone is thus an activity for which there does not seem to have been room for more than one person, even in a relatively large city like Lyon.

Unfortunately, the consulate archives only record a smaller proportion of paper purchases, but it can be observed that before Jean de Toulouse, the apothecaries who sold paper to the consulate were wealthy grocers, close to the consuls, whereas after 1520, they were much more modest apothecaries. Did the emergence of a papermaker who probably took a significant share of the paper trade in Lyon contribute to the disappearance of this ancillary activity of the wealthy apothecaries and relegate it to others of lesser means? The question might be tentatively answered, even if we do not have enough evidence to address it fully. Although it may not be a significant figure given the low number of cases, the average tax base of apothecaries selling paper before Jean de Toulouse was 850 *livres* while it was only 100 *livres* after him.

[p. 212]

Jean de Toulouse was in a somewhat intermediate position with a tax base of 382 *livres*. Since movable property also included professional material, it is unsurprising that Jean de Toulouse's movable property was of less value than that of apothecaries who traded in more precious products. As he was never mentioned as a grocer or apothecary, Jean de Toulouse was certainly not simply a grocer or apothecary who specialized in the paper business. It is therefore difficult to explain how he arrived in this profession, of which he seems to be the only practitioner in Lyon. His possessions indicate that he was not a small shopkeeper but a relatively wealthy man in Lyon. This may indicate that the paper trade had a certain added value that placed its traders in the upper-middle class of society.

The paper-trading activity of apothecaries is well recorded. During the Middle Ages, the terms apothecary and grocer were roughly equivalent, the former gradually replacing latter

in the fifteenth century.⁵¹ These traders were versatile:⁵² in addition to spices and medicines, their shops generally sold confectioneries, drinks, foodstuffs, stationery (paper, wax, candles, ink, etc.), soap, and other goods. This sale of paper is well attested by various examples in which apothecaries were involved in the retail trade of paper.⁵³ Our example confirms this practice in Lyon at the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It can be added that apothecaries were, for the consulate, the main source of paper supply before the arrival of a professional stationer, the other sellers providing only supplementary supply.

The location of these vendors in the city did not seem to matter. Lyon is divided in two by the Saône. The common house of the consulate is on the left bank, near Saint-Nizier. Guillaume d'Arras lived not far away and Philippe Gallan was also on the left bank but near the Rhône. On the right bank, Jean de Toulouse and Jean Rozet lived near the *Palais* while Ayme de Vise lived in *Le Change*, a little further north. Several wealthy apothecaries have properties in the countryside, generally not far from Lyon. Apothecaries often owned land, particularly vineyards, and this allowed them to obtain supplies of plants, wine and vinegar.⁵⁴

To complete this study of paper vendors, it is also necessary to mention booksellers who sold small number of white books or bound papers to the consulate.⁵⁵ Without investigation of further documents, little can be said [p. 213] about these sellers. The consulate sometimes bought ready-bound, blank registers of a well-defined size, but also often bound their registers

⁵¹ Jean-Pierre Bénézet, *Pharmacie et médicament en Méditerranée occidentale (XIII^e-XVI^e siècles)* (Paris: H. Champion, 1999), p. 62.

⁵² Bénézet, *Pharmacie et médicament*, p. 333-346.

⁵³ Bénézet, *Pharmacie et médicament*, p. 341.

⁵⁴ Bénézet, *Pharmacie et médicament*, p. 149-153.

⁵⁵ For example: AML, CC652 n° 3.

after they had been written on loose sheets of paper⁵⁶. Municipal accounts thus include binding expenses⁵⁷.

Watermarks

Watermarks are of great importance to the study of paper as a material. By investigating Lyon's accounting records, we were also able to examine this aspect of paper. The accounts, as material as well as textual objects, provide valuable testimony of the paper used by the consulate. Copied by the treasurer, they are most certainly made on paper purchased by the consulate and completed shortly after the last date of the account. This provides a wealth of information on narrow dates of purchase and allows the close monitoring of developments in the consulate's pattern of purchasing paper. In addition to the accounts, the supporting documents (invoices, receipts, etc.) written by the treasurer but also by employees, salesmen, and others, most of whom are also from Lyon, give a sample of the many types of paper available in Lyon.

These supporting documents make it possible to observe the great diversity of the types of watermarks found in papers in Lyon⁵⁸. This contrasts sharply with the great unity of the watermarks found in the official documents of the consulate after 1465. Between 1466 and 1486, the dominant watermark on the consulate's papers was a C-shape (Briquet n°8111), and a variant with a cross (unknown to Briquet). More than three quarters of the accounts have one of these two watermarks; other papers also contain these watermarks, but with a small number of leaves bearing other watermarks. Then, between 1486 and 1506, we find almost exclusively a

⁵⁶ See Anna Gialdini's chapter in this volume.

⁵⁷ In the same accounts, there are also expenses for bookbinding, mainly administrative documents to be kept. These expenses are obviously much rarer than the purchase of paper (about ten for the beginning of the sixteenth century). For example (in 1512): "Aujourduy vingtieme de mars mil cinq cens et douze monseigneur le receveur de baileux a paye par ordonnance de messires les conseillers a claude huguetan libraire la somme de vingt solz tournois pour avoir relie ung grant livre en papier des actes de lostel commun en grant volume de groz cuyr rouge pour lequel a este fait marche entre luy a ladite somme de vingt sols tournois" (AML, CC620 n°19).

⁵⁸ We will not list all the figures found but we have swords, stars, fleurs-de-lis, bells, crowns, different types of Saint Catherine's wheels, grapes, hands... Briquet counted more than 800 watermarks from Lyon (over a much longer period but without being exhaustive).

watermark of a Saint Catherine's wheel with the capital letter P (similar to Briquet n°13448-13454). From 1506, a watermark [p. 214] appears with the letter B (similar to Briquet n°8018). This 'B' watermark coexists with the Saint Catherine's wheel watermark, which appeared earlier, as well as the next watermark to appear: the letters qb (?) merged with a star and a patriarchal cross (Briquet n°9753-9754), which appears in 1513. Over such a long period of time, the design of these watermarks naturally evolves, but they always remain very similar overall. Before 1465, there were many watermarks, including several variants of the C-shape (Briquet n°8111), dominant from 1466-1486.

Briquet has already recorded these four watermarks in Lyon. He also relied on additional papers in the consulate archive, in particular consular acts (BB series in the archives). Briquet found similar watermarks, occurring at similar times, in these documents. Papers bearing these watermarks can also be found in some of the archives of the city's churches. According to Briquet, watermarks with the letters C and qb are quite rare and are found most often in Lyon. The watermark with the Saint Catherine's wheel with the letter P exists in documents in Lyon, Forez and Auvergne. Finally, the watermark with the letter B is very common; we find it everywhere in France but, during the same periods as in Lyon, in Forez and Auvergne (e.g., Ambert, Montbrison) as well as in Lyon editions. This would tend to confirm that the paper used in Lyon came from Auvergne or Forez, which are located west of Lyon.

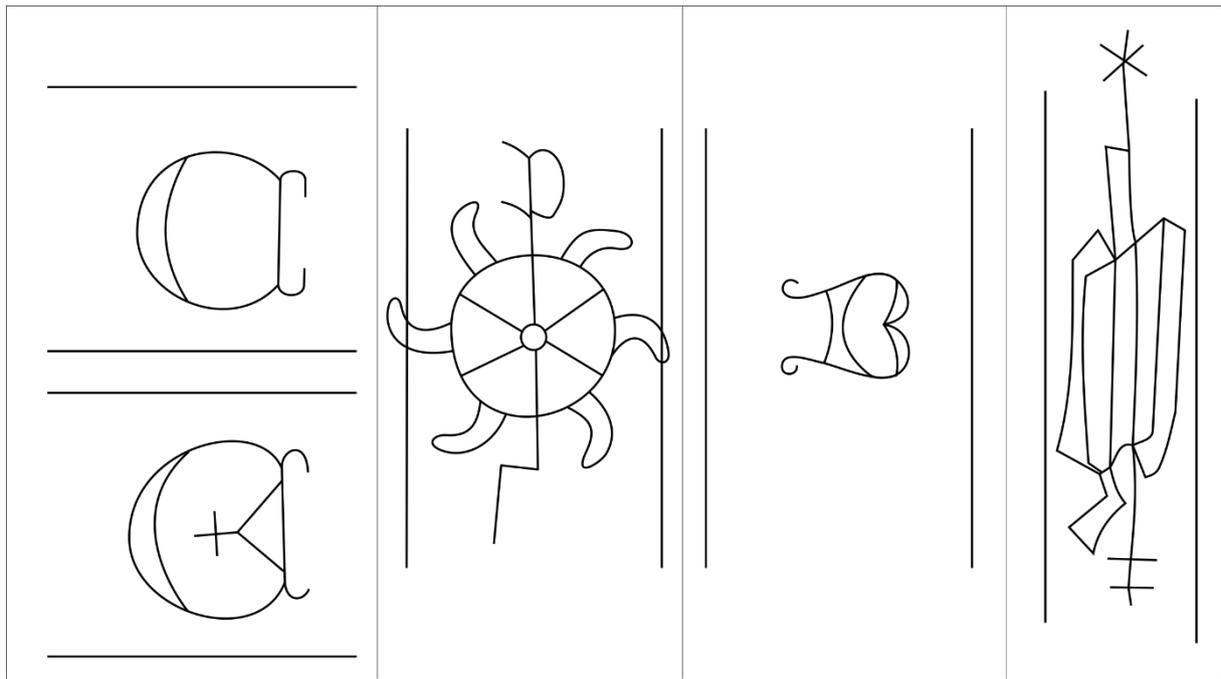


Fig. 3: The four watermarks of the consulate's papers (with the two versions of the C)

This strong predominance of a watermark over a long period indicates that the consulate bought paper from a papermaker or a group of papermakers using the same watermark and maintained this source for a long time. The [p. 215] existence of a few sheets with other watermarks indicates that the consulate occasionally bought paper outside its usual vendors. This confirms our hypothesis of an ordinary purchase of paper from an official seller for the functioning of the consulate, supplemented occasionally by other purchases elsewhere as needed. Given the diversity of watermark types existing in Lyon at this time, it seems quite likely that this unity would attest to a single seller for ordinary use. It seems unlikely that the consulate had several suppliers who owned exactly the same paper at the same time for more than 50 years.

We can suppose either a direct sale by a papermaker, probably from Auvergne or Forez, who would regularly come to sell in bulk in Lyon, or an indirect sale by a stationer or an apothecary in Lyon who would have a single supplier and would sell at retail. This second proposal finds supports in Jean de Toulouse's invoice of 1517 and in the absence of these

purchases in the accounts, which can only correspond to relatively small amounts. The distance, about 100 to 150 km between Lyon and Auvergne or Forez, could also have made it difficult to obtain sufficient regular supplies without intermediaries in the city.

The transition from the C-shaped watermark to the one with Saint Catherine's wheel with the letter P is quite abrupt around 1486 and may correspond to a change of seller. We could also consider that the Lyon salesman may have changed papermakers but the duration of use of each of the watermarks – 20 years for the C-shaped one, 20 more years for the one with Saint Catherine's wheel – would give him a very long career.

The other transitions are less clear. If Jean de Toulouse was indeed the main paper seller to the consulate around 1507-1520, it can be assumed that he became so around 1506. He would correspond to the use of the watermark with the letter B which coexists with the watermark with the letters qb shortly afterwards. Indeed, Jean de Toulouse may have had several sources of supply at the same time since paper was his only product. We cannot say precisely when his activity as a stationer ceased, but it was before 1526.⁵⁹ There would have been a previous seller, perhaps an apothecary, between 1486 and 1506, but we do not know his name. Another supplier – perhaps the apothecary François de Rivoire –⁶⁰ would have been active between 1466 and 1486. These paper sellers would then have been associated with the supply of paper with the wheel of Saint Catherine with the letter P watermark and the watermark with the letter C, respectively.

[p. 216]

Conclusion

⁵⁹ That year, the consulate bought paper from Jean de Toulouse's widow (AML, CC757).

⁶⁰ Like Jean de Toulouse, he was frequently named in paper sales at that time. In addition, he became a consul in 1486, which could explain why the consulate found another seller.

The accounts of the Lyon Consulate allow a study of various aspects of the paper trade in Lyon between the end of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Even if many aspects remain invisible, a relatively large amount of documentation remains from this period. This documentation is especially interesting because it corresponds to the arrival of printing. This new industry, particularly active in Lyon, required great quantities of paper, which must have influenced the paper trade more generally, including the price and availability of writing paper. Consulate purchases reveal the evolution of paper prices, which doubled with the development of printing before returning to about 50% above their initial level, probably due to the growth in paper production. They also reveal the identity of several of the actors involved in this trade, and made visible their practices of selling paper. Apothecary-grocers were the main sellers of paper before the arrival of a stationer at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The sale of paper is known to be a secondary activity of apothecaries, but we see here that they are the main actors in this trade, probably until the volume of paper being traded was sufficient for a stationer to make a living exclusively from this trading activity. Printing certainly helped to make this condition possible. In Lyon, Jean de Toulouse was the first stationer, appearing around 1507. Throughout the period studied, he seems to be the only one. But occasionally, paper was purchased from other sources, especially from those who also used it in their own activities, such as copyists, painters, playing card makers. A few papermakers from Auvergne also visited Lyon from time to time and sold their products there. The consulate made regular paper purchases that went unrecorded, but are marked by a strong unity of watermarks over long periods of time. While the types of watermarks available in Lyon are quite varied, this unity reflects the dominance of a few sellers. Other players in this market occasionally sell a few quires or reams of paper, bringing some diversity to the watermarks and leaving more tangible traces in the accounts.

This case study demonstrates the importance of using administrative documentation to understand the ‘usual dealings’ of the paper trade. These records have been very rarely studied up to now, and evidence for the price of paper is rare for the sixteenth century in scientific literature, despite its importance for the economic history of the book. Despite the many gaps in this type of documentation, it offers much information about the actors within the paper trade, and the practices and networks through which paper was purchased. In line with the themes of this volume, the Lyon case study shows how fruitful a perspective on practices of the involved actors of the paper trade and the materials they traded can be. By starting with the material evidence of the papers [p. 217] used for administration purposed in Lyon, views on the supplying networks of the paper trade were made possible. Institutional archives have the advantage of having been much better preserved than private archives, especially for earlier periods. In the absence of the records of merchants or paper producers, which is overwhelmingly the case, these are precious traces of paper transactions. But paper purchases are rare in the accounts and little effort has been made to count them. Economic history studies that have focused on accounting have also shown little interest in paper. However, it would be necessary to check what could be derived from work already done and then to search archives over larger geographical and temporal areas. The accumulation of additional raw data could generalize the cases presented here and refine the trends that have been explored here. For administrations that wrote directly onto the paper they purchased, the cross-referencing of information between archival and material data is important. The difficulty of linking archived paper and purchase notes also requires the multiplication of examples. But it takes time and probably more modern tools than the *Dictionnaire historique des filigranes* from Briquet. As this case shows, however, a future paper trade history profits from linking archived paper of administrations to purchase records.

