

Supralibros

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Abstract

Ex-libris has emerged from a need to mark ownership when books could be duplicated with the invention of printing. While not actively used in our times, supralibros, a type of ex-libris stamped on the book's cover was produced until the end of the 19th century. Supralibros is the stamping of the name, coat of arms, initials or monogram of the book owner on the book cover. It can also be used as a personalized binding. This study examines and evaluates the emergence of supralibros, its applications, aesthetic qualities, techniques and collectorship.

Keywords: ex-libris, supralibros, coat-of-arms, personal library, personal bindings.

Introduction

Since ancient times, people have indicated the ownership of text with various signs. “Ex-libris are works of art containing ex-libris text and the name of book owner (not its author) as well as illustrations on various subjects that book lovers paste on the inside cover of their books” (Pektaş, 2003:13). “As it is known, ex-libris is a graphic design product showing who owns the book and contains ex-libris text along with the name of the person to which it belongs” (Keş, 2016:112)

Supralibros, Appearance and Features

According to Klaus Rödel, ex-libris emerged almost at the same time as printed book for two purposes, namely protection and decoration of the book. Ex-libris is a powerful reminder to the borrower of who owns the book. The return of a borrowed book kept on the shelf can take a long time (Rödel, 2002:17). Ex-libris can take various forms such as a label affixed to a book; stamp applied on the cover; or supralibros which contains heraldic motifs stamped on the outer cover. (http://www.abdn.ac.uk/historic/Collection_highlight_archives_jano7.shtml)

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Image 1: Book with supralibros with the arms of 1772 Salzburg Archbishop Kont Hieronymus von Colloredo



Image 2: Book with supralibros from the Library of Napoleon Bonaparte



Image 3: Supralibros composed of first letters of first name surname



Image 4: Supralibros stuck in the lid



Image 5: First name and surname of the first name is written in the supralibros

The owner can simply write their name on the book, but an artistic ex-libris glued to book a better indication that it is valuable. Thus, the earliest ex-libris dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries were designed for nobility, the church, famous civil humanists (for example, Willibald Pirckheimer), and traders. The most famous artists at the time, Albrecht Dürer, Barthel Beham, Hans Sebald Behan, Virgil Solis, Jost Amman, Hans Baldung Grün, Lucas Cranach and Hans Holbein devised magnificent ex-libris with “hand-colored” art made of wood veneer (Rödel, 2002: 18). Movable printing types invented by Gutenberg led to an increase of printed books and various public and private book collections. Many of these books contain ex-libris or supralibros that indicate ownership. Nowadays often more expensive than the book itself, these supralibros are very rare.

Signs of personal ownership are generally known as supralibros when applied to bookbinding. Other signs of ownership stamped on bookbinding are the name of the owner, initials, monograms, or some combination of these. (http://privatelibrary.typepad.com/the_private_library/2010/10/in-search-of-supralibros-at-the-private-library.html)

Supralibros is the stamping of the name, coat of arms, initials or monogram of the book owner on the book cover. It can also be used as personalized binding (<http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/glossary3.html>). Supralibros is an emblem or monogram indicating the ownership of a book. Unlike seals and ex-libris inside the book, majority of supralibros are on the front and sometimes back covers of books. There may also be a small supralibros on the spine of the book. Just like ex-libris, supralibros marks ownership

of the book. It is designed specifically as a symbol of possession. The first supralibros was used during the Renaissance when the first large personal libraries were established. Famous librarians and collectors such as Jean Grolier have used supralibros in their books. And collection values of books containing supralibros have been higher. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/supralibros>)

A frequently encountered type of supralibros are school award bindings; especially given to gifted students, ties with leather and stamped with the coat of arms of the school that won the award. After the 18th century, the use supralibros has been declining, however, such school award bindings were used until the 20th century.

Supralibros have become quite popular especially in countries such as France, England, Italy and Spain. These marks can be manually embroidered as part of a fabric binding or stamped with a gold leaf.

Of course, as is the case with ex-libris, supralibros does not guarantee that the owner will retain the book in question. People who have the supralibros pattern in their possession can also use it for books that do not belong to that person. (http://privatelibrary.typepad.com/the_private_library/2010/10/in-search-of-supralibros-at-the-private-library.html)

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Supralibros collections are mostly expanded through purchases without any swapping involved. The largest known collection of supralibros is Danish collector Ejgil Jenssen Tusche's collection of Swedish supralibros. While collecting ex-libris, particularly supralibros, by means of removing it from the book is not ideal, this is a situation that cannot be avoided today (Rödel, 2002:19).



Image 6: Supralibros applied on book front cover, back cover and back



Image 7: Book from Salzburg University Library collection with a supralibros of Leopold Anton Eleutherius von Firmian

Conclusion

While supralibros are not actively produced today, it has been widely used throughout the 15th to 19th centuries. While produced for same purpose as ex-libris, swapping and collecting these has not been widespread enough due to their being stamped on the book cover. Today, many supralibros encountered bears a much more collection value than the book itself. Aesthetic values, composition, and clarity has been at the forefront in supralibros, and its communicating the name of person or family the book belongs to has been the focus.

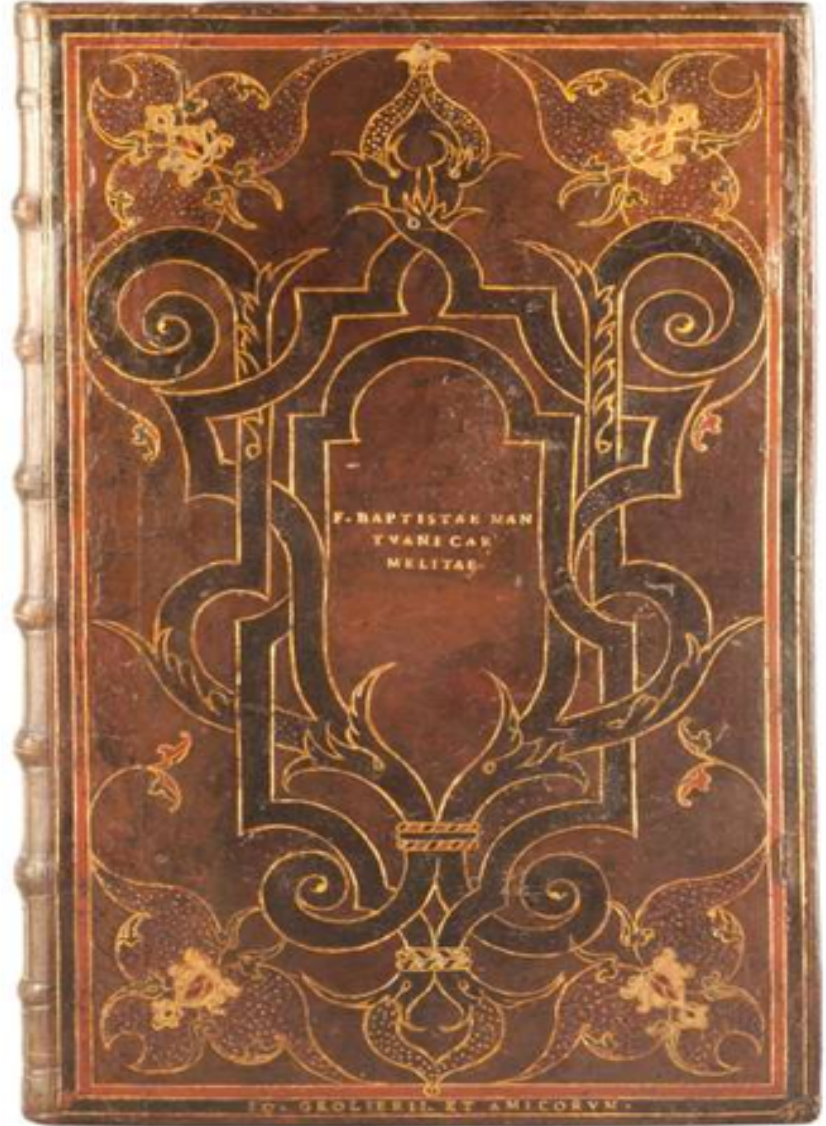


Image 8: Book with supralibros from the collection of French book collector Jean Grolier

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