







MEI

A brief guide to editing in the database Material Evidence in Incunabula

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MEI: PRELIMINARY STEPS

I) Examine the collection: learn as much as possible about the history of the collection so to recognize particular signs and evidence in the books.

2) Examine the incunable you want to catalogue and start taking notes (on a piece of paper) on all the signs of provenance and try to arrange them consistently and in chronological order.

PLACES AND DATES ARE VERY IMPORTANT

CREATE A MEI RECORD

- Once you have collected the relevant information on paper, create a record in the **following order**:
- □FIRST, work on the 'Owners of Incunabula' Database (e.g. Smith, John; Oxford, Balliol College, etc.).
- **SECOND**, create the **MEI record** for the incunable.

OWNERS OF INCUNABULA (OOI)

Check the presence, and, if necessary, create new records for the owners in the 'Owners of Incunabula' Database (e.g. Smith, John or Oxford, Balliol College, etc.) **BEFORE** creating MEI records for the incunabula.

The **Owners of Incunabula** database is accessible by clicking on **Datasets** in the bottom menu.

This database is particularly useful because, once you have created a good Owner record, every time you will insert the same provenance in a MEI record it will populate the Provenance Information automatically, saving time and preventing mistakes.



data.cerl.org/owners/_search#nu

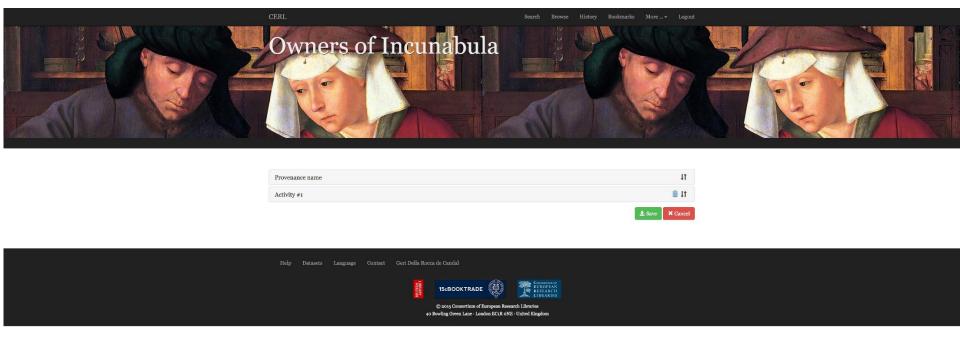
If you wish to **SEARCH** or **EDIT** a record, search for the record in the search tab.

To **CREATE** a record of provenance (person or institution) in the **Owners of Incunabula** database, click on **More** (top menu) and then **Create a new record**.



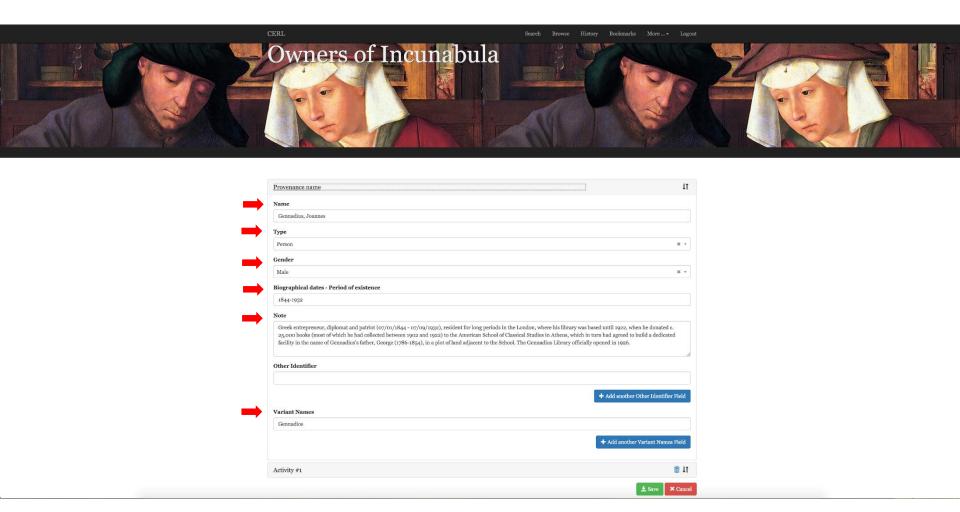
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This is how a new record looks in the Owners of Incunabula Database.



In **Provenance Name**, fill in all the relevant information, following the model below. Make sure the information is correct, since, if it is not, it will be repeated in all the records you will create using this provenance!!!

Name format: IMPORTANT! See next slide.



CONTROLLED LANGUAGE:

- **Personal Name: [Surname, Name]**. Example: Correr, Theodorus. If a religious, add the Sigla, ex: Cleuen, Franciscus, OSB
- Corporate Name (religious): [City, Order, Dedication, Sigla]. Example: Venice, Benedictines, S. Zacharia, OSB. This is basically the Bod-inc and IPI model, which allows best browsing.

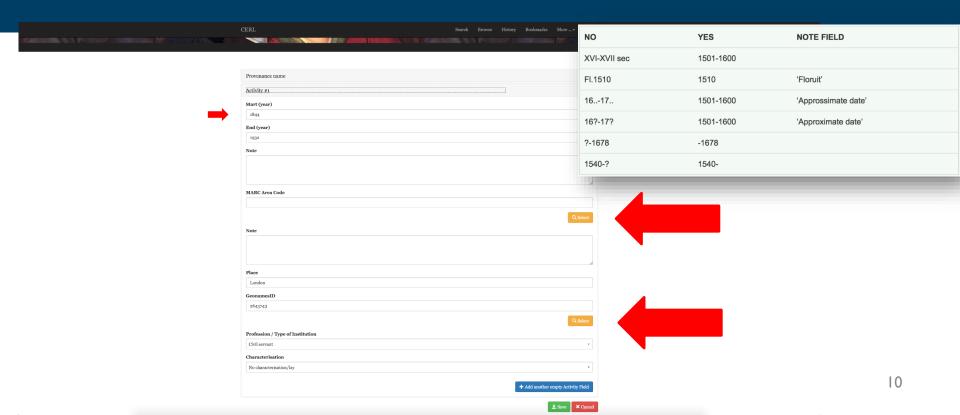
Corporate Name (lay): [City, Name]. Example: Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana



Provenance name	
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Gennadius, Joannes	
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Gender	
Male	X v
Biographical dates - Period of existence	
1844-1932	
Note	
Greek entrepreneur, diplomat and patriot (07/04/1844 - 07/09/1932), resident for long periods in the London, where his lib 25,000 books (most of which he had collected between 1902 and 1922) to the American School of Classical Studies in Athens facility in the name of Gennadius's father, George (1786-1854), in a plot of land adjacent to the School. The Gennadius Librar	, which in turn had agreed to build a dedicated
Other Identifier	
	+ Add another Other Identifier Field
Variant Names	
Gennadios	
	+ Add another Variant Names Field
Activity #1	ii 11

In **Activity**, fill in **ALL** the relevant information. Particularly regarding **Dates**, the same principle applies as with MEI records (if incorrect, the machine cannot read them), so follow carefully the MEI guidelines. Add **MARC Area Code** for the country, and **Place** and **GeonamesID** to allow the system to locate the place on the map. Add **Profession /Type of Insitution** and **Characterisation**. Remember, once you are back in the MEI record, to add the **ROLE**, which has to be added manually every time (since it may chance).

Most Owners will have only **1 Activity**. In rare cases (e.g. a student buys a book in Bologna, then settles his/her library in Frankfurt, and we have precise dates for both periods) it is possible to have more. Generally speaking, however, best to stick to 1 Activity, listing the dates of birth and death (or foundation/end), either precise or approximate.



MEI

Once you have finished inserting all the relevant information in the Owners of Incunabula database, you are ready to create MEI records.

The Material Evidence in Incunabula (MEI) database is accessible by clicking on Datasets in the bottom menu.

If you wish to **SEARCH** or **EDIT** a record, search for the record in the search window: for example, typing the ISTC number

To **CREATE** a new record:

After Login, click on More and then on Create a new record.



Material Evidence in Incunabula

MEI is a database specifically designed to record and search the material evidence (or copy specific, post-production evidence and provenance information) of 15th-century printed books: ownership, decoration, binding, manuscript annotations, stamps, prices, etc. MEI is linked to the Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (ISTC), provided by the British Library, from which it derives the bibliographical records, and it allows the user at last to combine searches of bibliographical records (extracted from ISTC) with copyspecific records.

Uniquely, every element recorded (a certain style of decoration or binding, a manuscript note, etc.) is treated as a valuable clue for provenance, therefore it can be geographically located and chronologically dated. Explicit ownership notes are further categorised as private or institutional, religious or lay, female or male, and by profession. This enables tracking of the movement of books across Europe and through the centuries.

Manuscript notes, equally valuable for understanding the readership of the early editions, are classified according to their frequency and their type: corrections, completions, supplements, extraction of key words, collation, translation, structuring the text, comments, censorship, reading marks (underlining and pointing hands). These data allow for sophisticated social studies on the use of books, readership and reading.

Prices and currencies, fundamentally important to the economic study of the book-trade, are also individually recorded. This will allow a critical mass of evidence to be submitted to the analysis of economic historians.

Personal and institutional names of ownership are linked to the CERL Thesaurus, where further bio-bibliographical information can be found. This provides links to other editions identified with the specified name, clarifying whether the owner was also an author, thus merging ownership and authorship information. Provenance locations are also linked to the CERL Thesaurus, which off ers geocoordinates and map locations. MEI is being developed to provide a physical representation of the circulation of books throughout the centuries, from place of production, to their present locations.

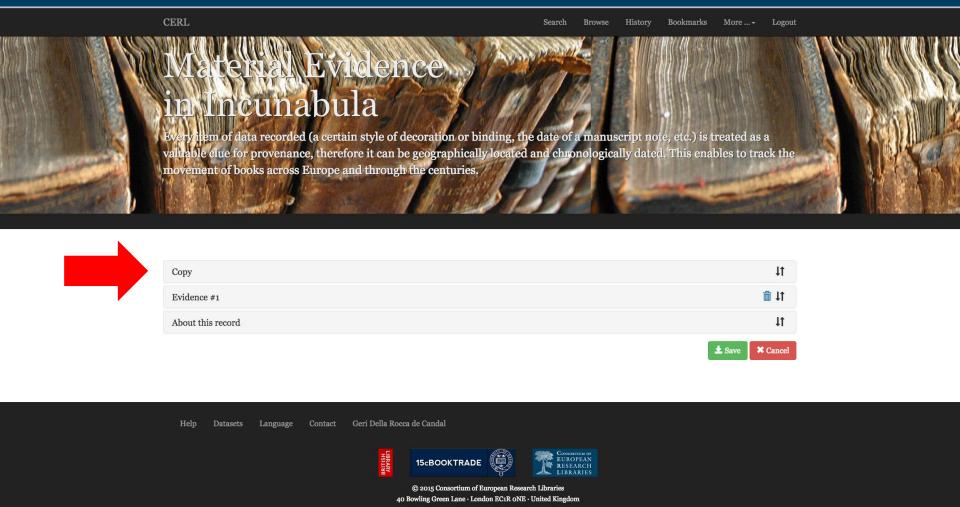
For some basic statistics on this database click here.

Read more about this database on the CERL Website...

This is how a new record looks.

The bars **Copy** and '**About this record**' remain unvaried, while '**Evidence** #' can increase for as many blocks of provenance evidence you wish to create. See further on how to create new blocks of evidence. Ignore '**About this record**', you will never have to use it.

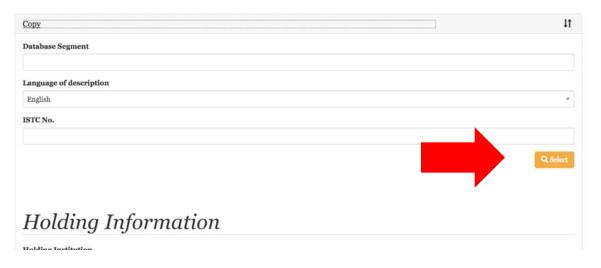
Start from: COPY.



Background image by Tom Murphy VII CC-BY-SA-3.0

- In **Copy** there are a few very important things that need to be completed, and a number of others that are unessential. Of the first three elements, **Database segment** (ignore), **Language** (ignore), **ISTC N° IS ESSENTIAL** (if you do not insert it, you will not be able to retrieve the record!!!).
- 1) Find your edition on the ISTC website (in another screen!) and copy the ISTC number (eg: ia00067600);
- 2) Back in MEI, click on **SELECT** (yellow tab) and paste the ISTC number.
- 3) Click on the edition that appears.



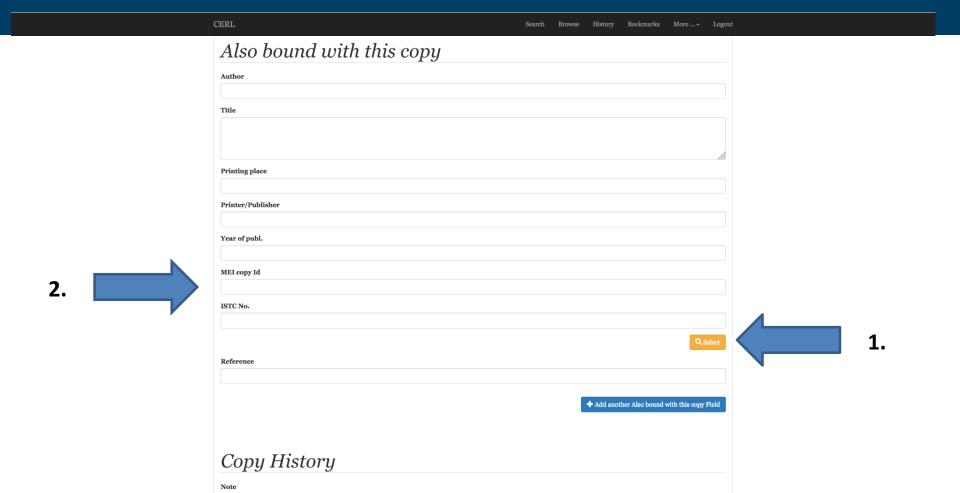


In **Holding Information**, the **Holding Institution** is essential: **select** (yellow tab) and find your institution. **Collection** (ignore, except in very specific cases). **Shelfmark** is **essential. Holding note** (ignore). **Note**: add '**Created by *Name Surname***' e.g. 'Created by Geri Della Rocca de Candal'.

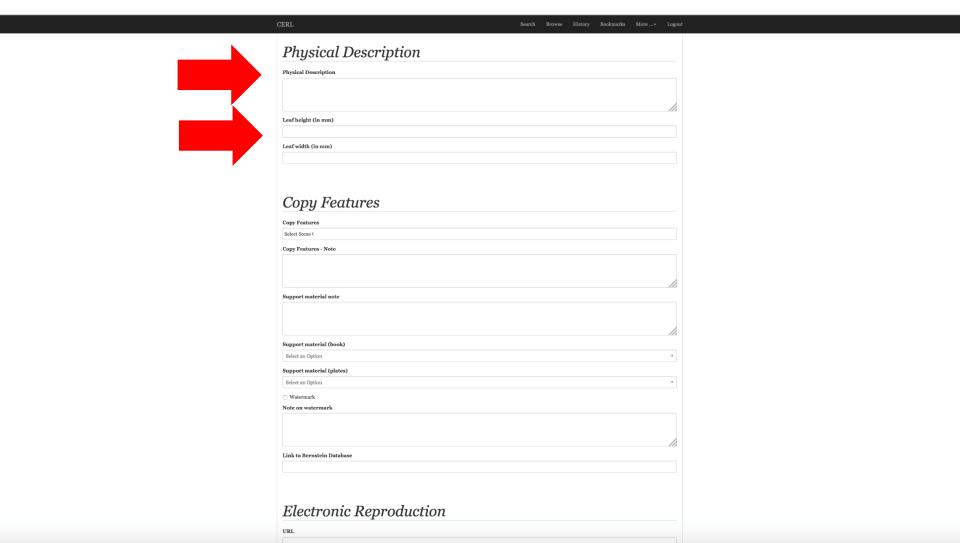
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Also bound with this copy: relevant if there is another MS/printed edition bound together with the incunable you are describing. If this is the case, (1) just click the yellow tab by the ISTC no., type the ISTC no. and select the result: all the bibliographical information you need will be populated. If that edition/copy is already present in MEI, (2) just add the MEI number manually. Info on a manuscript or post-incunabula bound with your edition has to be added manually.

Copy history (ignore).



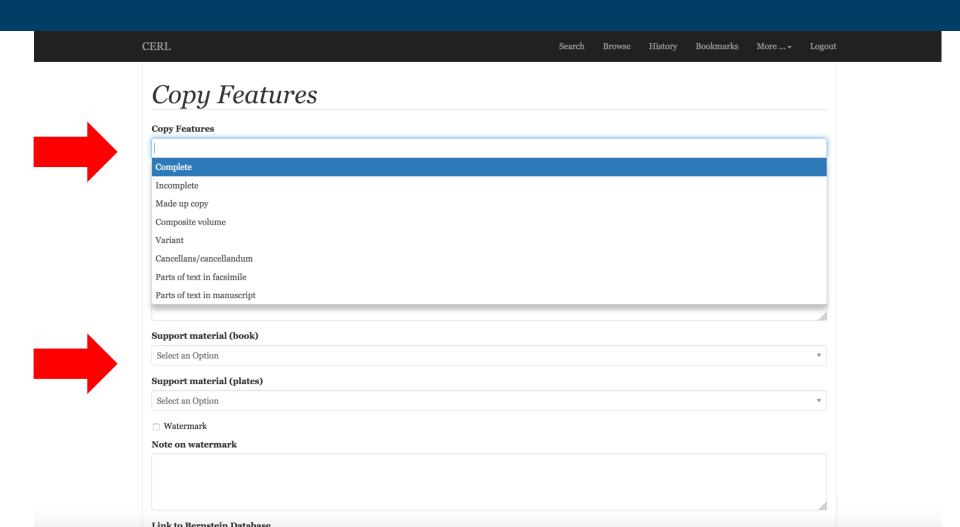
Physical description: if the volume is incomplete, this is where you will describe the details (e.g. 'wanting a1'). Add the leaf height and length, in mm.



Copy features: very important. Choose as many options apply (e.g. Complete, Incomplete, Parts of texts in facsimile, Parts of text in manuscript, etc).

Support material (book) (i.e. printed on?): usually paper (rarely parchment).

Support material (plates): ignore. Watermark and Note on Watermark, Bernstein Database, etc: ignore, unless it is the copy of a particularly rare edition (check ISTC – if less than 20/25 copies worldwide, contact me).



Electronic Reproduction: only add if you have a digitised version, complete or partial, of YOUR copy. If so, contact me for further details.

Other Identifier (ignore). Other information (ignore).

Completeness: choose '**Incomplete**'. Once the description of the copy is concluded, change to '**Complete**'.

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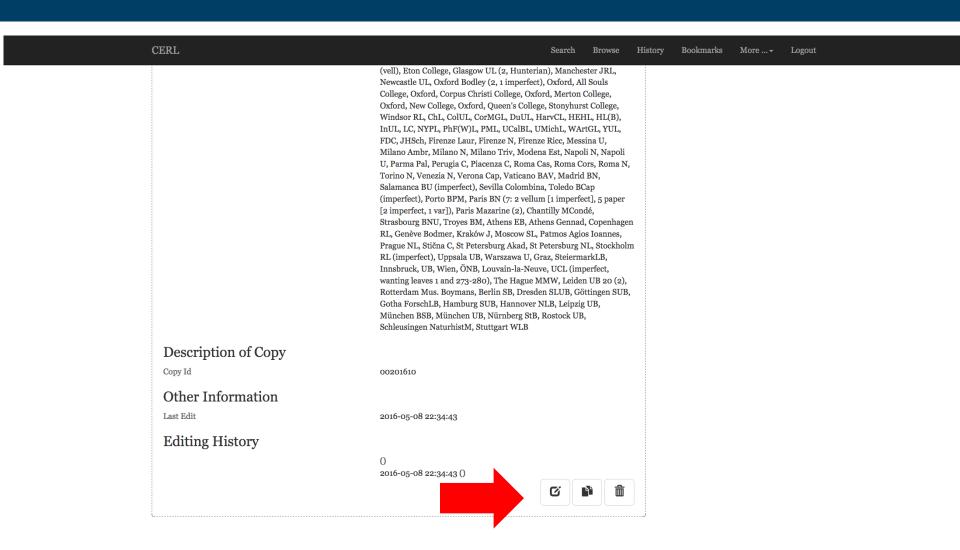
At this point you have completed the description of **Copy.** To stay on the safe side, **SAVE** the record (**green tab**).

Remember to save frequently to avoid loss of data!!!

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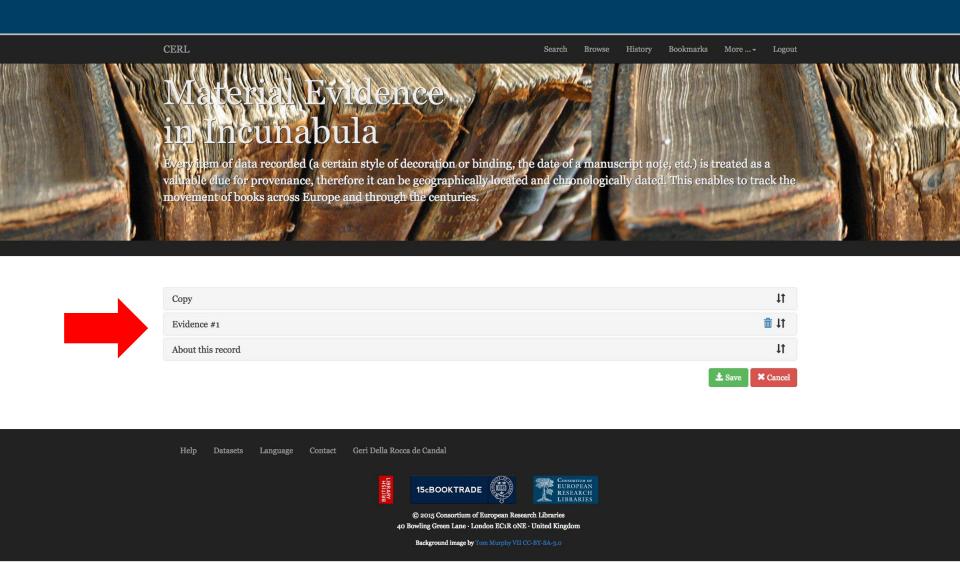
Once you have saved, you will see the record as it looks. Scroll to the bottom, and click the **first tab** on the left (square with pen) to **EDIT** the record.

The second tab creates a duplicate of the record, and the third tab (bin) deletes the record. Use the latter with caution!!!

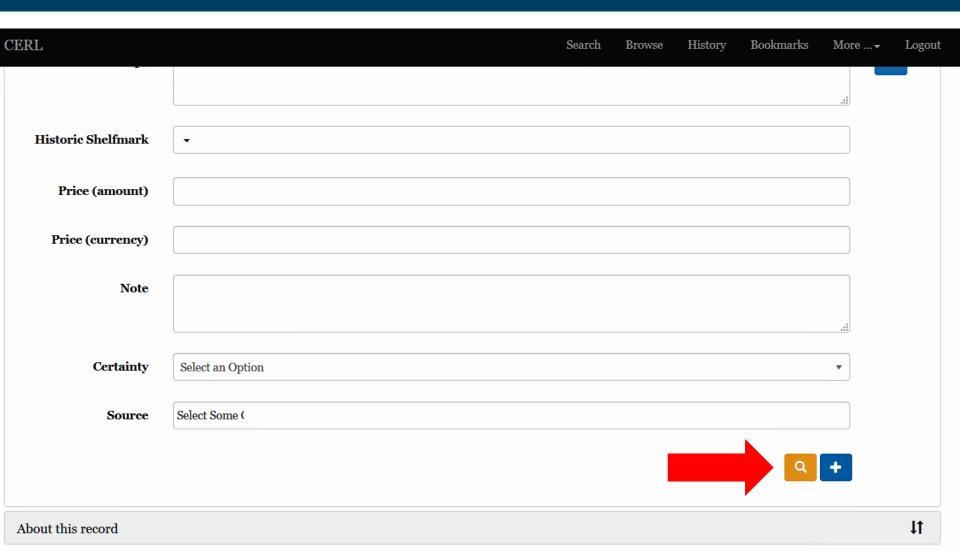


After you have clicked on Edit, you will get back to this point. Now you are ready to describe the blocks of provenance.

Click on 'Evidence #1'.



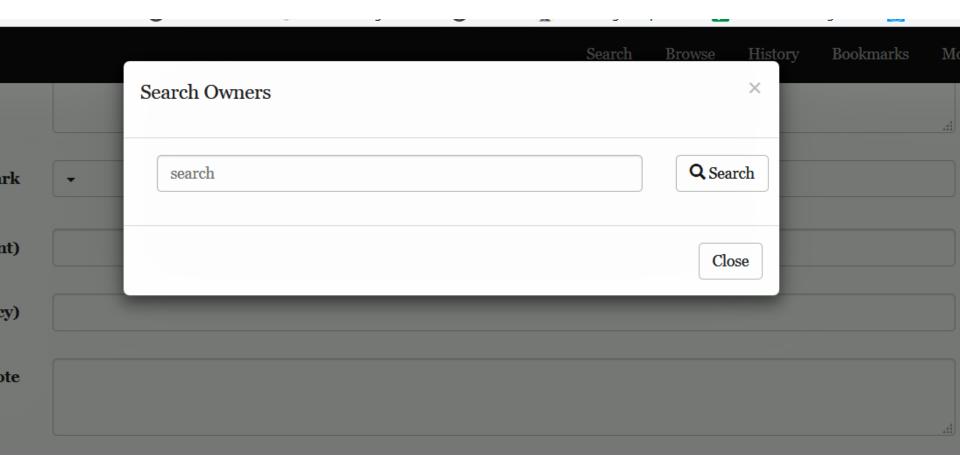
ATTENTION: To retrieve a provenance name and its attributes, which you have already created in the Owners of Incunabula satellite database (OOI), you have to **SCROLL DOWN TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN**, and click on the **YELLOW BUTTON** (Add another Evidence field):



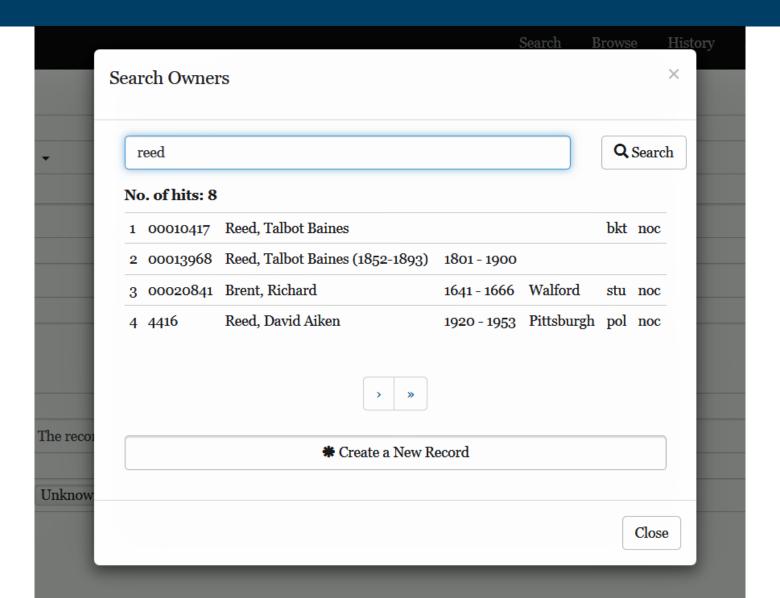
≛ Save

X Cancel

A pop-up screen will allow you to digit the provenance name you want (whose record you previously created in OOI database), for example, type 'Reed'



Select the name you want



ATTENTION: A new 'Evidence 2' field will appear just below. Click on that and forget about 'Evidence 1': it will be deleted once you save (because it is empty).

You will find that the block of 'Evidence 2' contains most of the details you need about the former owner

Except for one: ROLE. You have to select the appropriate one.

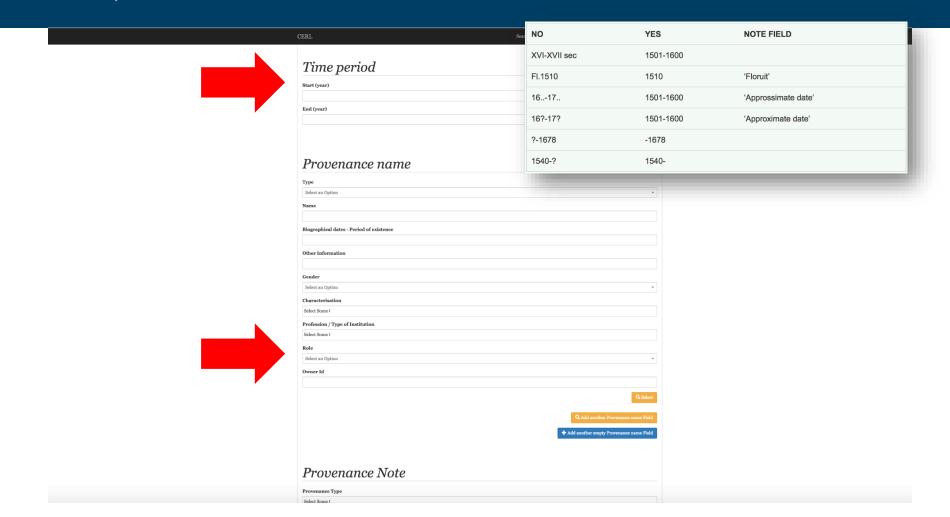
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1) CHECK THAT TIME PERIOD IS CORRECT. You may need to adjust it to reflect when the book came into the possession of the owner. For example, Time Period for Talbot Reed is 1852-1893, his biographical dates, but he may have acquired a book in 1890, so you will use in TIME PERIOD 1890 and 1893.

2) Select relevant ROLE.

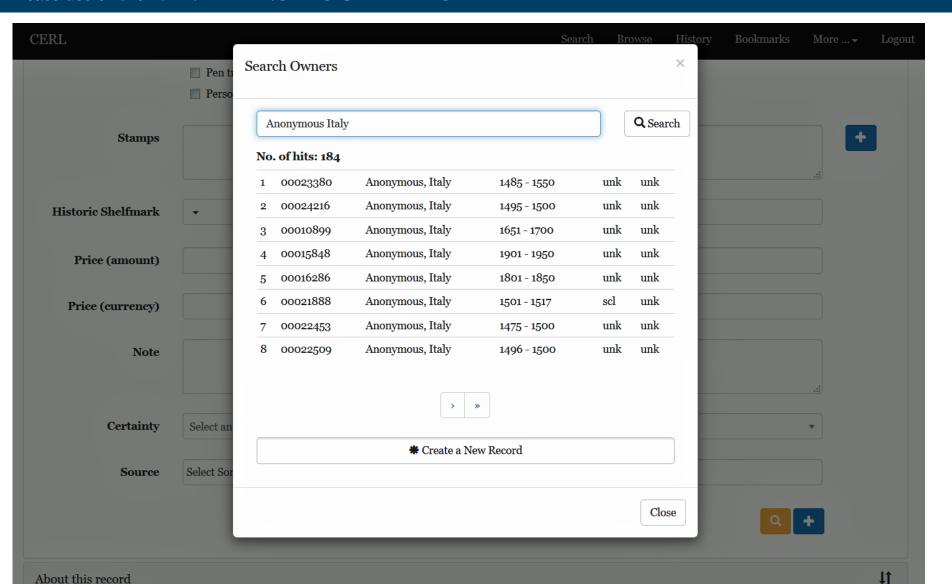
ATTENTION: In MEI, time is as important as space (so, again, don't be shy): in **Time period**, insert either exact dates or approximate dates, but follow carefully the MEI guidelines on how to insert dates (see picture inserted here).



ANONYMOUS PROVENANCES

Clearly many provenances (based on decoration, binding or manuscript annotations evidence) are anonymous: we have thus created a number of **records for 'anonymous' provenances** in the Owners of Incunabula database with geographical and chronological boundaries (e.g. Anonymous, Italy [1475-1525]).

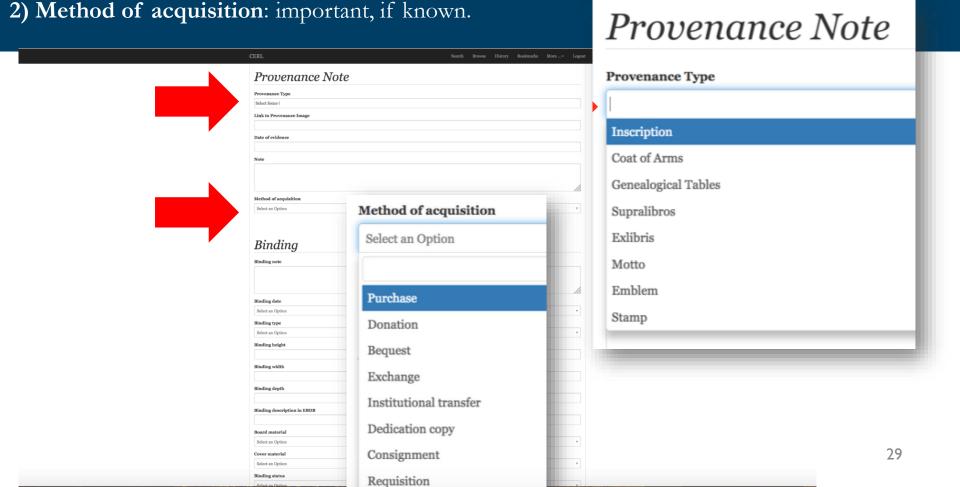
Please use of them! AND TRY NOT TO CREATE MORE



In **Provenance Note**: 1) **Provenance type** is essential: select one or more. If you select 'Inscription', the text of the inscription should be inserted right below, in the 'Note' field. For all other options (e.g. 'binding', 'stamp', etc.) scroll down to the next sections of this block of evidence.

Difference between inscription and manuscript notes? An inscription is **ONLY** a note of ownership (e.g. 'ex libris Marci Tullii' or 'This book belongs to Erasmus'). Any other annotation goes under 'manuscript notes'.

Link to Provenance Image (add here the PDA link, if you have uploaded a picture there). **Date of evidence** (type specific date, if present).



Describe the **Binding** to the best of your knowledge. **Do not hesitate to ask for help identifying** it. If you cannot associate a binding to a particular block of provenance that you have already identified (space and time), then the binding requires a specific evidence block, in which the binding alone is described.

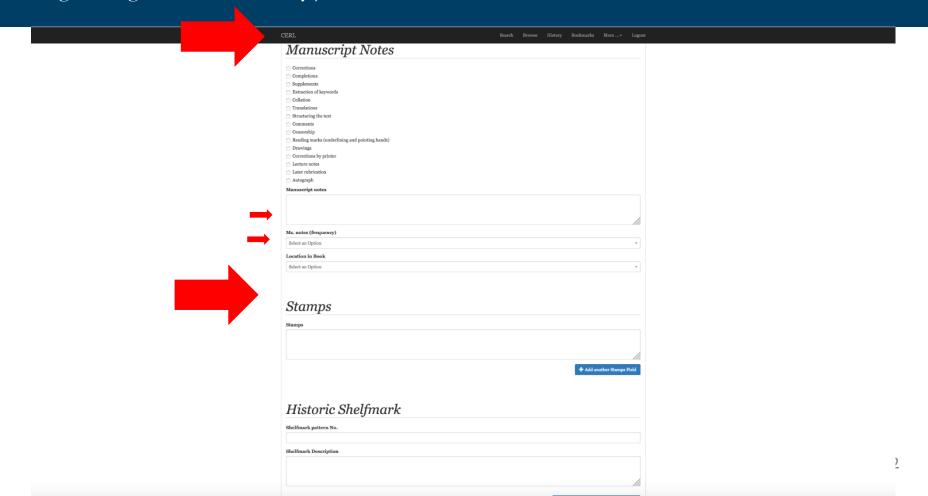
Please fill in all, or as many binding descriptors as possible. In **Binding note** you can add a brief textual description (e.g. 'brown Russian calf, gilt fleuron'), or copy information from an earlier description.

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If the book has **Decoration** or **Rubrication**, please describe it here. Again, as with bindings, if you **cannot** associate a decoration or rubrication to a particular block of provenance that you have already identified (space and time), then these sections require individual, specific evidence block, in which the decoration and/or rubrication alone is described.

CERL	Search	Browse	History	Bookmarks	More ▼	Logout
Decoration						
Decoration Note						
Illustration coloured in by hand Illuminations Ornamental letters Coat of arms Rubrication Partial rubrication Pen initials Illustration stamped in						
Rubrication note						
Rubrication date						

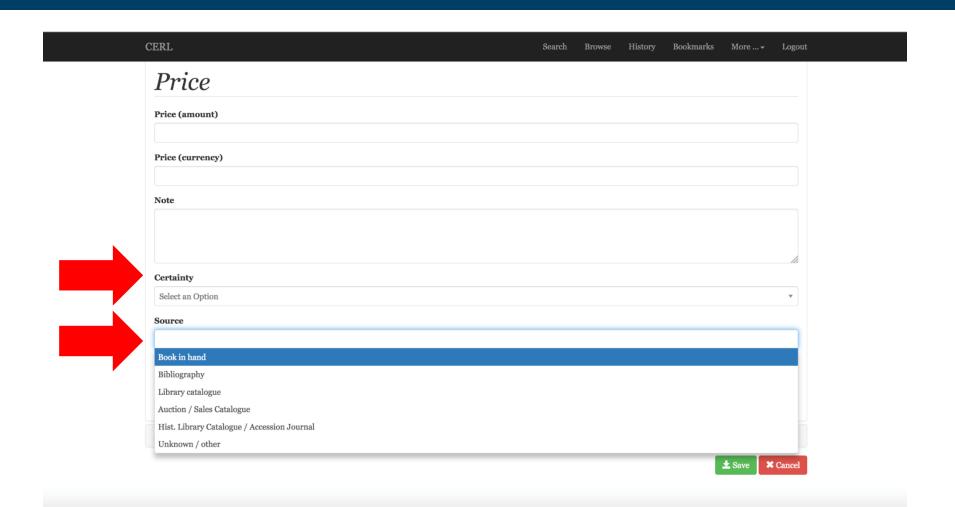
- 1) Manuscript notes: Tick all the appropriate boxes (e.g. corrections, censorship, etc.) and in Manuscript notes you can provide a short textual description of the marginalia (e.g. '16th c. Latin marginalia, brown ink, German hand'). MS notes, if not connected to a specific block of provenance (space and time), should be described separately. Please also describe the **Frequency** and **Location** in **Book** (useful to understand reading practices).
- 2) Stamps: describe, if any (same principle applies regarding provenance: if a stamp is the sole evidence of a prov., describe separately. If not, it goes together with the block of provenance it belongs to, e.g. 'Bodleian Library').



Following the same principles described above on how to ascribe evidence to a new block of evidence, or a single one containing multiple evidence, describe the presence of **Historic Shelfmarks**, if any (enquire about the **Shelfmark pattern n°**, if necessary). If the **price** of the book, in one of its passages of ownership, is known, complete the information here, e.g. 10; GBP; (in **notes**) 'Price inscribed in pencil on the front pastedown'.

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- The final step in completing a block of evidence involves stating:
- 1) The **Certainty** of the evidence. Usually, unless highly dubious, one can consider the described evidence almost invariably certain.
- 2) The Source of the evidence (essential) i.e. where does the information come from? From the examination of the copy ('Book in hand'), from a catalogue, a bibliography...etc?



At this point the description of a block of evidence is **complete**.

If you wish to **create a new block of evidence**, you have two ways:

- 1) You immediately click on the **yellow tab 'Add another Evidence Field'**, to retrieve another OOI entry you have created.
- 2) You save the record (green tab), follow slides 19, 20 and 21 again, open the last evidence block created, scroll down to the end of the block, and click on the **yellow tab**.

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BY CLICKING THE BLUE TAB 'Add another empty Evidence Field', YOU CREATE AN EMPTY PROVENANCE BLOCK, WHICH NEEDS TO BE COMPLETED MANUALLY (not importing data from OOI).

The new, empty, block of evidence will appear right under the blue tab.

Datasets Language Contact Geri Della Rocca de Candal

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Since the point of MEI is to tag space and time, this info, when available, is essential, so don't be shy. Write down the **Place** name (e.g. 'Milan'), then click on the **yellow tab** 'select' – this will open the Geonames window, where you will write 'Milan' again, and then select the appropriate option from the list ('ppl' option is preferable).

Repeat with Area: click on yellow tab 'select' and insert the country name ('Italy') in the window that will have opened. In both cases add notes if necessary (e.g. further info for small places: Carpi, province of Modena, Italy).

THEN CONTINUE AS DESCRIBED ABOVE

