



# Call for Papers

## Knowledgeable Youngsters

### Youth, Media and Early Modern Knowledge Societies

June 26 and 27, 2015, Utrecht



Deadline proposals: 1 February 2015

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<http://youthandliteracies.wp.hum.uu.nl/knowledgeableyoungsters/>



Universiteit Utrecht



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE  
FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE



This conference seeks to fill an important gap in our understanding of the early modern knowledge culture: the significance of youth literacies. How were the young (loosely defined here as 'unmarried people') taught to interpret and use textual and visual media (abilities commonly defined as 'literacies'), and were thus capable to creatively and productively contribute to scientific, cultural, economic, and social innovations of the period?

Recent research has highlighted the importance of adult literacy for the revolutionary transformation of a knowledge culture in Western Europe between 1500-1800. It has shown, for instance, how in England scholars but foremost craftsmen and artists became the driving forces behind knowledge innovations thanks to their newly acquired literacy skills. Recent research has also explored how visual media, such as portraits, enabled adults to find the security of self-awareness while developing the new social structures that made possible the economic miracles that has come to be known as the Dutch Golden Age.

Literacies thus played a vital role in the accumulation of various types of knowledge among adults (f.i. knowledge of the world, knowledge of the self). But hardly any research has been done into the dynamics between the rising knowledge culture and the role of youth, although in the past decades historians and literary scholars have recognized the crucial role of youth culture in the social change and the creative outburst in early modern Europe. We know surprisingly little about the significance of youth literacies for intellectual, cultural, professional, personal, social and religious life in a period that witnessed a revolutionary change in media of communication.

The central question of this conference, therefore, is: *How were young people trained and invited to develop literacies that were vital to their professional careers and personal lives, and what did their literacies contribute to the flourishing of the new knowledge-based society?*

This issue is addressed in three central themes:

1. **Artisanal Literacies:** How did youngsters develop artisanal literacies that were vital to enhance the youngsters' knowledge production and creativity? And what knowledge and creative ideas did youngsters produce with the acquired literacies? Papers concerning this theme for example focus on the growing number of artisanal, didactic texts for the youth published between 1500-1800 (recipe books, manuals etc. – often adorned with illustrations,

maps, graphs, schemes) and/or additional visual aids that found in objects such as paintings, scale models, globes etc.

2. **Media Literacies:** How did texts, paintings and music produced for the young help to develop literacies that enabled the young to evaluate, structure and interpret information? What knowledge and creative ideas were produced as a result of the developed literacies?
3. **Organization of Learning:** ever since the mid-sixteenth century, humanists and religious reformers alike realized that the improvement of human society could only come about through better education of the young. How were educational systems and practices adapted to serve as base for the societal changes at hand during the early modern period?



During this conference, we seek to bring together distinguished experts in the fields of early modern knowledge culture, visual arts and textual culture who are dedicated to conduct and stimulate research into the interdependence of literacies, knowledge production and early modern youth in West-Europe. We invite papers that explore case studies, but also papers that explore the issue of youth literacies on a conceptual level, exploring how textual and visual media and educational settings were used in new ways to shape the evolving knowledge societies.

The focus is on two societies: the Low Countries and England. These societies combine a relatively large number of young people, with a high literacy rate, a rapidly developing educational system and an enormous production of books and visual arts, including a large output of books for the young. We do, despite this focus, also welcome papers that focus on transnational, comparative developments. In order to gain a broader perspective, comparative contributions that shed light on differences in youth literacies from one European country to another are especially welcomed.

Presentations should be 20 minutes in length. An abstract of not more than 350 words, should be sent to Feike Dietz (Utrecht University, [f.m.dietz@uu.nl](mailto:f.m.dietz@uu.nl)) before *1 February 2015*. Some selected papers will be considered for publication in the planned conference volume.



# Organisation and sponsoring

The conference will be organised by Feike Dietz, Sven Dupré and Els Stronks (Utrecht University and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science), in cooperation with Laurence Brockliss (Oxford University), Ann J. Jensen (University of California at Santa Barbara), Jürgen Pieters (Ghent University), Pamela H. Smith (Columbia University), Lee Palmer Wandel (Wisconsin).

The conference is sponsored by the Utrecht Descartes Centre for the History and Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities, the Utrecht University's strategic theme 'Dynamics of Youth', the Utrecht research institute ICON, and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. The conference will be held on June 26 and 27, 2015 in Utrecht.

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