

Call for Papers: **The Authors of the Early Modern Commentaries on *De sphaera***

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Workshop: February 13-15, 2018

Deadline for abstract submission: March 30, 2017

Johannes de Sacrobosco compiled his *Tractatus de sphaera* during the 13th century in the frame of his teaching activities at the then recently founded University of Paris. The *Tractatus*, a qualitative introduction to geocentric cosmology, became a mandatory text all over Europe, and a tradition of commentaries was soon established and flourished until the second half of the 17th century. The original tract reappeared in the later treatises, but these were gradually enriched with further commentaries, chapters on different subjects, and a myriad of notes. The title also changed slightly so as to include the name of the original author; Sacrobosco became synonymous with his introductory textbook on cosmology.

A long list of scholars broached this subject and produced new commentaries. A recent census shows that, after the spread of printing technology, over 300 different editions of treatises on *The Sphere of Sacrobosco* were produced until 1650.

Scientific commentaries are genuine scientific works that have to be investigated not only in reference to the work on which it comments, but also and especially as independent scientific contributions that need to be socially, institutionally, and intellectually contextualized around their authors. Such authors have always had their own agendas, and these may have differed radically from that of the author of the so-called original work.

**Approach and research questions:**

The workshop focuses on the period of production of commentaries on *The Sphere* of Sacrobosco from 1472, the year of the first printed publication, to 1650, by which time the relevance of the treatise as a textbook had clearly declined.

The aim of the workshop is to determine what kind of intellectuals the authors of *The Sphere* were, their educational and social backgrounds, how their careers developed after the publication of their commentaries, the institutions and patrons they were affiliated with, what their agenda was, and whether and how they actually accomplished it.

Following to this approach, the papers can consider both single authors and one or more well-defined groups of authors.

By referring to these aspects, the discussions will consider specific characteristics of the treatises and, using the knowledge gathered on the individual authors of the commentaries, more general inferences will be drawn about the social diffusion of the commentaries and the relation between their production and institutional affiliations. Finally, the discussions will focus on possible processes of transformation that were linked specifically to the profiles of the authors of the commentaries.

## Output of the workshop

A publication of collected papers is planned. The presentations will also be recorded and could be made available through the official project website hosted by the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin.

## Working plan

- Declaration of interest to receive the full list of authors of printed commentaries on *The Sphere of Sacrobosco* (please email to: [valleriani@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de](mailto:valleriani@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de))
- Submission of abstracts of max. 500 words as well as a CV (deadline: March 30, 2017)
- Confirmation of attendance will be sent to the participants by April 2017
- Submission of pre-circulating papers of between 8 and 12,000 words (deadline: November 30, 2017 - detailed instructions will be sent to the selected attendees)
- A complete reader of all papers will be circulated by December 2017
- A max. three-day workshop will take place in Berlin (February 13–15, 2018)
- Submission of the final versions of the papers (deadline: March 30, 2018 – the modalities of publication will be discussed internally among the attendees)

I look forward to hearing from you soon and wish you all the best,  
Matteo Valleriani