

A matter of aesthetics? On the interrelation between spelling variation and page layout

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The early book printing of incunabula bears a challenge for historical linguistics. At a time when codification via dictionaries and grammars could not yet take effect, different spelling variants and different punctuation methods coexisted. The efforts of the compositors provide valuable information about the principles according to which these craftsmen carried out the coding and recoding of text passages; it may also shed some light on the motives behind the modification of written word forms and of line justification. In my talk I will argue for a stronger consideration of questions of visual arrangement and even page size in the explanation process, since the text layout and the format could affect the orthography and punctuation of the incunabula.