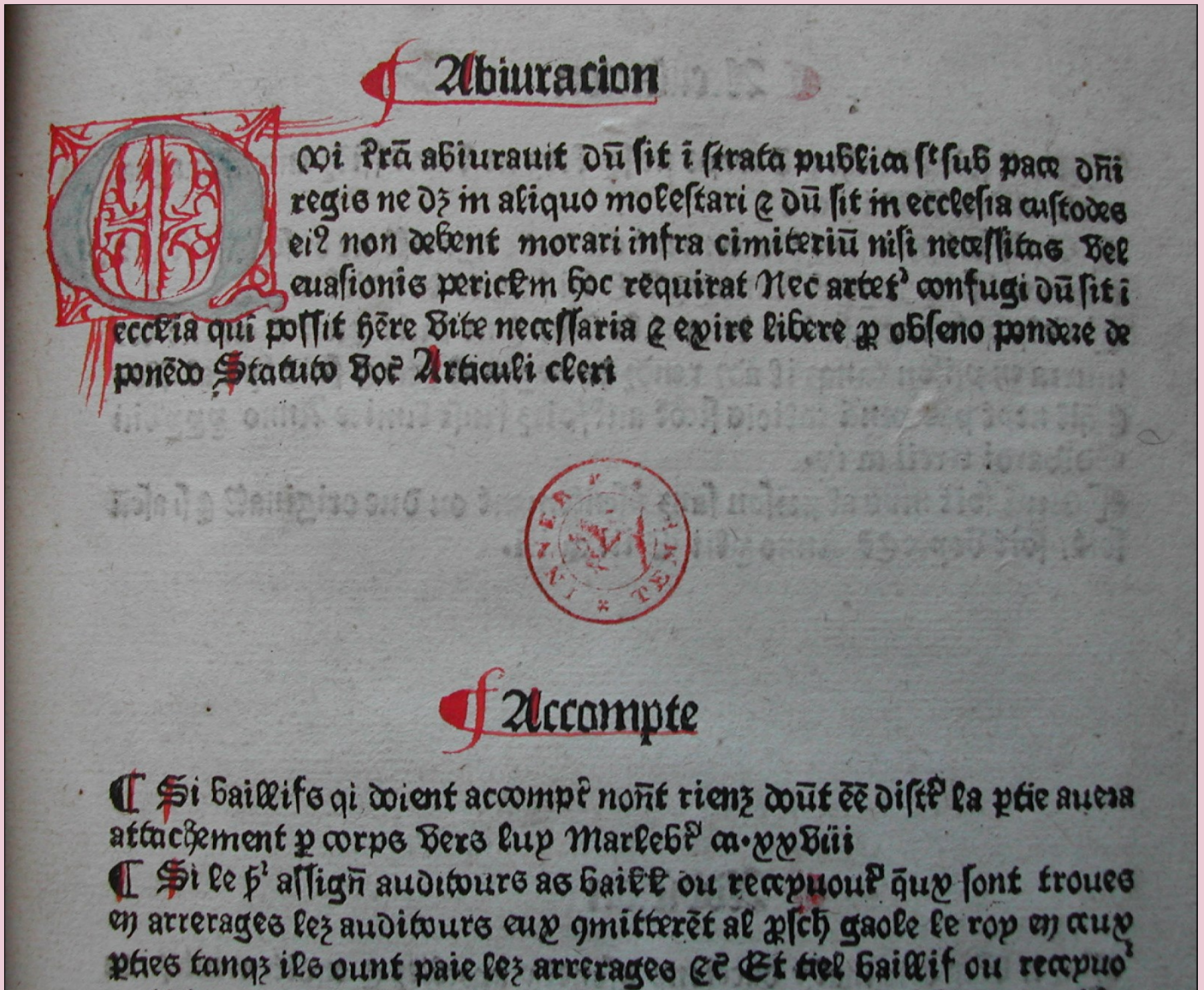




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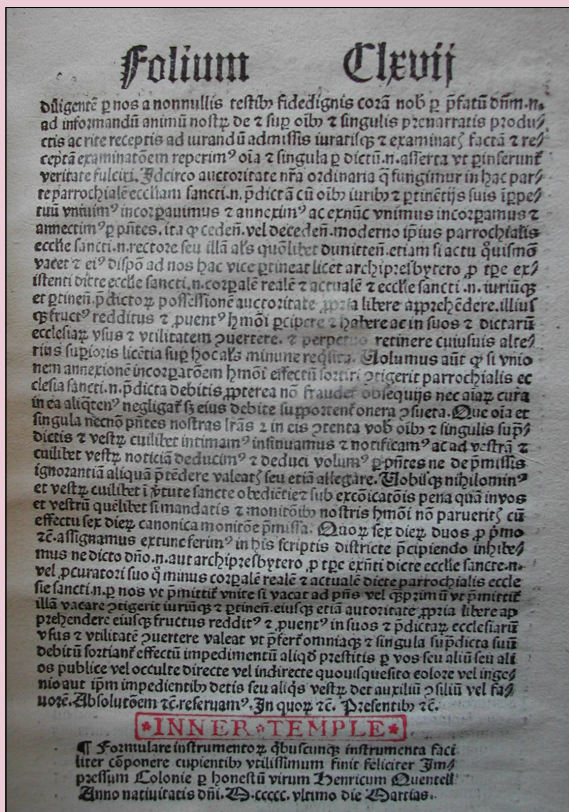


Abbreuiamentum statutorum, c.1481 © The Inner Temple Library

“New” Incunabula

September 2015

Based on an article in the *Inner Temple Library Newsletter* Issue 29, July 2012



Formularium instrumentorum

1500 : colophon

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to the compilers of the Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (ISTC), an online census of copies of 15th-century imprints which is hosted by the British Library.

The second is Statham’s *Abridgment of cases to the end of Henry VI*, printed at Rouen by Guillaume Le Talleur for Richard Pynson. We were shown a copy of this when we visited the House of Lords Library a few months previously, and although it was felt at the time that a Library such as ours might be expected to have a copy – it is in fact the only incunable to be held by all four Inn libraries – no-one could recall having seen one. As it turned out, our copy had been dated to “around 1510”, possibly at the time when it was rebound early in the last century. The actual date of printing is variously given as “around 1488 to 1490” and “1490”; certainly well within incunable territory.

The third, and perhaps the most remarkable, is *Formularium instrumentorum ad usum Curiae Romanae*, a collection of forms relating to canon law. This was discovered among a batch of outwardly unprepossessing volumes in the basement of the Littleton Building loosely classed as “Ecclesiastical”. The date of printing, in the colophon hidden away between the text proper and the index, is 1500, specifically “the last day of March”, and the printer Heinrich Quentell of Cologne. Copies are evidently very scarce: ISTC lists only two others in the British Isles, one of them a small fragment. Our copy is complete except for the first leaf, and moreover part of the binding appears to be contemporary. Quite a find.

In 2012 we discovered two additional incunabula in the Library, and “rediscovered” a third. Incunabula (or incunables) are books printed before 1501, and therefore in the “infancy” of printing; the Latin word means “swaddling clothes”. (The cut-off date is quite arbitrary and does not relate to any development in the printing process.)

To take the items in chronological order, the first is *Abbreuiamentum statutorum*, printed in London by John Lettou and William de Machlinia around 1481. This came to light when an enquiry from a colleague at the Middle Temple Library led us to look more closely at our incunable holdings. This item was not altogether unknown; however since it is bound together with a manuscript work, it had been included in the manuscript catalogue but not accounted for as a printed book and not reported