

Scholars and Literati at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon (1725–1793)

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This note summarizes our research into the group of scholars and literati at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon from 1725 to 1793.

1 THE ACADEMY

The Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon was founded thanks to the generosity of Hector-Bernard Pouffier, the dean of the Parliament of Burgundy (as a reminder, the 13 French Parliaments were originally courts of law). Through his will, dated October 1, 1725, he made all the arrangements to create the academy. Three years after his death, Mr. Latin, the subsequent dean of the Parliament, sought letters patent to establish this academy, and thanks to the protection of Louis-Henri de Bourbon, the governor of the province, as well as the Counts of Saint-Florentin and Maupas, who were members of the French government, he obtained them from the king in June 1740; they were registered by the Parliament on the 30th of the same month. These letters patent were followed by statutes composed of 48 articles derived from Pouffier's own provisions, which determined the authority of the academy, as well as the subject of its conferences, limited to matters of physics, morality, and medicine. According to Roche (1978), the regional state of Burgundy was key since it paid all the teaching activities with its own funds. The 24 academicians, who were all scholars and natives of the Duchy of Burgundy, included 6 honorary members and 12 pensioned members (4 in physics, 4 in morality, and 4 in medicine), not all of whom were actually pensioned but who were the sole recipients of prizes. Lastly, there were 6 associates or "aspirants" (2 in each discipline).

Shortly after the creation of the academy, the need to reform Pouffier's plans arose: his project was considered to be unfeasible and contrary to the practices of other such institutions. In 1773, the academy acquired the Despringle town house, allowing it to relocate from the cramped Pouffier town house. In 1775, it evolved into the Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Humanities of Dijon. As every other learned society, the academy ceased its activities on August 8, 1793. There followed a tumultuous period from which it emerged in 1798 as the Free Society of Sciences, Arts, and Agriculture of Dijon, only to be dissolved once more and revived under its original name. The academy was ultimately expelled from its town house in 1841 and has since been housed by the city of Dijon.

2 SOURCES

The primary source used here is "Mémoires de l'Académie des sciences, arts et belles-lettres de Dijon", published in 1871 and written by Philibert Milsand (1818 – 1892). He was an assistant librarian and a member of the academy. A complementary source is the CTHS website, which is an online database. A few other sources were used to confirm information.

3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 displays some descriptive statistics. For the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon, there is a long list of 404 members from its foundation until 1800. These scholars became members when they

were relatively old (42.8), but stayed for the remainder of their lives (mean age at death of almost 70). Among these scholars, many were corresponding members. The median distance between their birthplaces and the academy was 175 kilometers. The corresponding members were generally famous scholars. This explains that 43.3% of the members have a Wikipedia page and 53% are listed in the VIAF catalog.

Period	nb. obs	birth date	known place	mean age at appoint.	mean age at death	med. dist. birth-univ.	with Wiki.	with VIAF
1725-1800	404	60.4%	57.7%	42.8	69.9	175	43.3%	53%

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

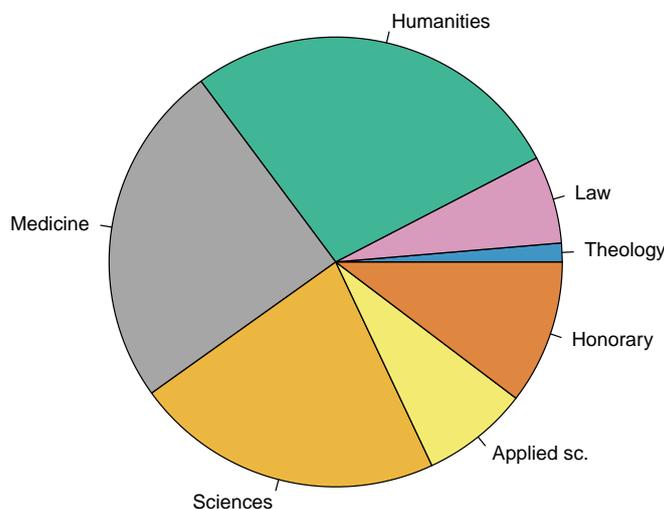


Figure 1: Broad fields at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon (published scholars only)

4 FIELDS

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of academic disciplines within the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon. Notably, the scientific fields, encompassing medicine, natural sciences, and applied sciences, command the largest share in the pie chart. Another pattern is a common occurrence in academic institutions: a substantial number of the members cannot be considered as scholars as they held honorary positions. Their presence significantly contributed to enhancing the institution's prestige and credibility.

5 PLACE OF BIRTH

Figure 2 displays the documented birthplaces of the ordinary members active at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon. Figure 3 shows the birthplaces of the corresponding scholars and literati. The ordinary members of the academy came from diverse regions around Dijon. There is a distinct geographical pattern for the birthplaces of the corresponding members. Notably, a significant number came from the Eastern and Southeastern regions of France, as well as the Holy Roman Empire and Sweden. Interestingly, there were no corresponding members hailing from Italy, Spain, or England.

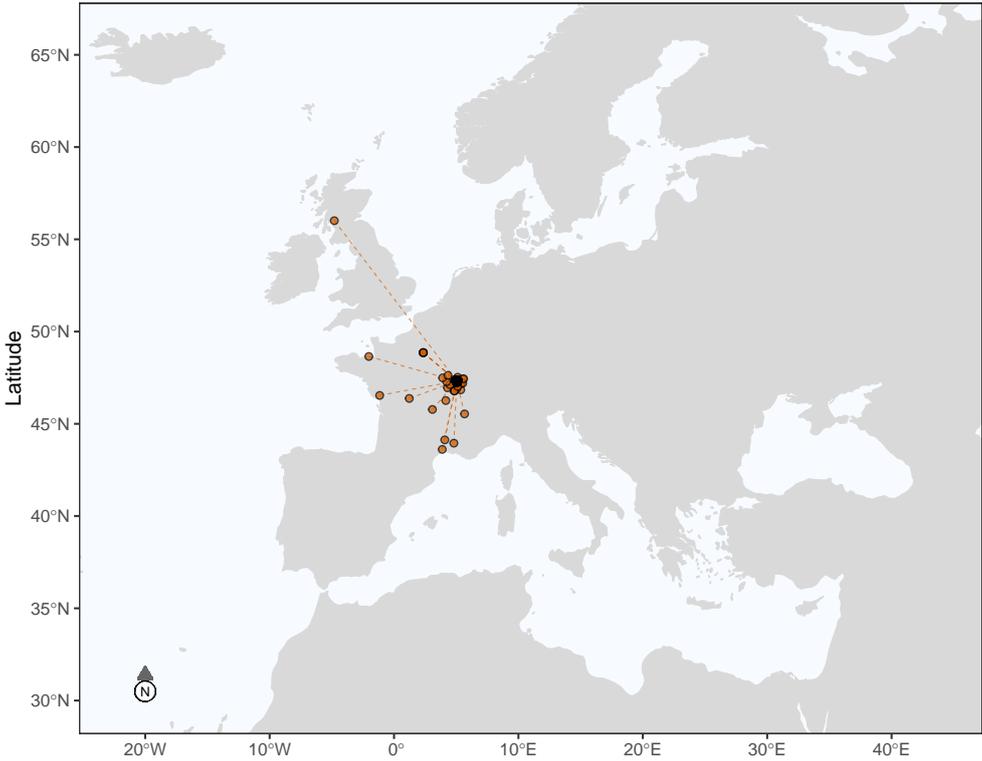


Figure 2: Places of birth of the members of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon

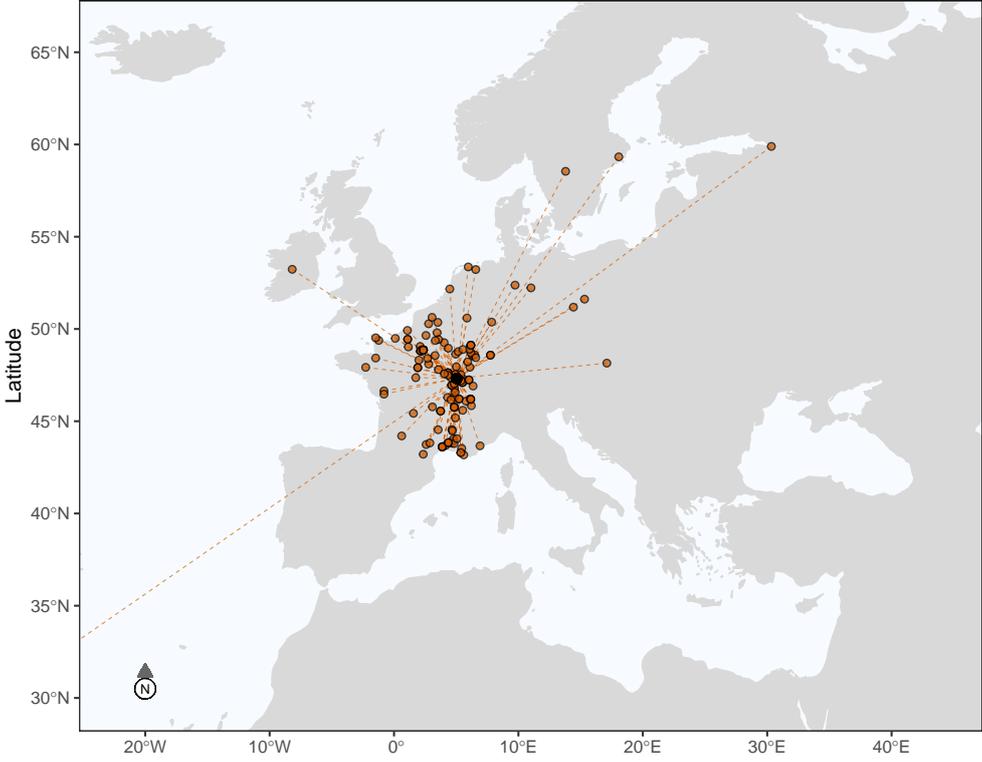


Figure 3: Places of birth of the corresponding members of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon

6 HUMAN CAPITAL OF SCHOLARS AND LITERATI

For each person in the database, we compute a heuristic human capital index, identified by combining information from Worldcat and Wikipedia using principal component analysis. Figure 4 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon.

7 TOP 5 SCHOLARS

Charles de Brosses (Dijon 1709 -- Paris 1777) was a French magistrate, historian, linguist, and writer. He received his classical education at the Jesuit school in his hometown where he was a classmate of Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, who remained his friend throughout his life. He then studied law and he was appointed, at age 21, as a counselor in the grand chamber of the Parliament of Burgundy. Driven by a deep passion for the works of the Roman historian Sallust, he embarked on a quest to rediscover the lost book within Sallust's monumental history of the Roman Republic. Between 1739 and 1740, he traveled across Italy in pursuit of this elusive text. Despite his many efforts, this search proved unsuccessful. Undeterred, he devoted thirty years of his life to crafting a comprehensive 'History of the Roman Republic during the 7th century of Rome.' Within this ambitious endeavor, he meticulously worked to bridge the gaps that existed in knowledge, translating all the surviving fragments of Sallust's original work. In response to Buffon's encouragement and influenced by Maupertuis's 'Petites Lettres', Charles de Brosses wrote the 'Histoire des navigations aux terres Australes', a compilation of known voyages in the South Seas. He advocated for exploratory voyages to discover the Austral continent, believed to exist for mechanical reasons. It is Charles de Brosses to whom the origin of the terms "Polynesia" (1756) and "Australasia" is attributed. He also provided articles of literary criticism for Diderot and D'Alembert's 'Encyclopédie'. He joined the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon in 1761. He was also a free associate at the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres in 1750. The conflicts he had with Voltaire prevented him from being admitted to the French Academy.

Joseph Jacotot (Dijon 1770 -- Paris 1840) was a French educator. He created a teaching method called the "Jacotot method" or method of "intellectual emancipation." This method is primarily known for its emphasis on self-directed learning and the idea that students can teach themselves and learn independently. He completed his secondary studies at the Dijon secondary school. He obtained a doctorate in literature and became a humanities professor at the age of 19. He also obtained a doctorate in law, thus becoming a lawyer. Later, he studied mathematics and obtained a third doctorate. In 1795, he became a professor of ancient languages at the Central School of Dijon. He also taught physics and chemistry. He became an associate of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon on August 22, 1798.

Antoine Bret (Dijon 1717 -- Paris 1792) was a versatile French writer and playwright known for his prolific output across various literary genres. He dabbled in poetry, comedies, novels, memoirs, parodies, and daring tales, showcasing his diverse talents. While he possessed a polished writing style, considerable creativity, and a knack for clever critique, his reputation remained relatively unremarkable, never quite reaching the heights of literary greatness. Despite his skill in the art of drama, his plays often lacked the vivacity and comedic flair needed to captivate audiences. Over the years, he made significant contributions to publications like the Gazette de France and the Journal encyclopédique. Moreover, he served as a royal censor for operas, playing a crucial role in regulating the arts. On February 3, 1741, he was honored with membership at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon, and he also held a place among the esteemed members of the Academy of Nancy.

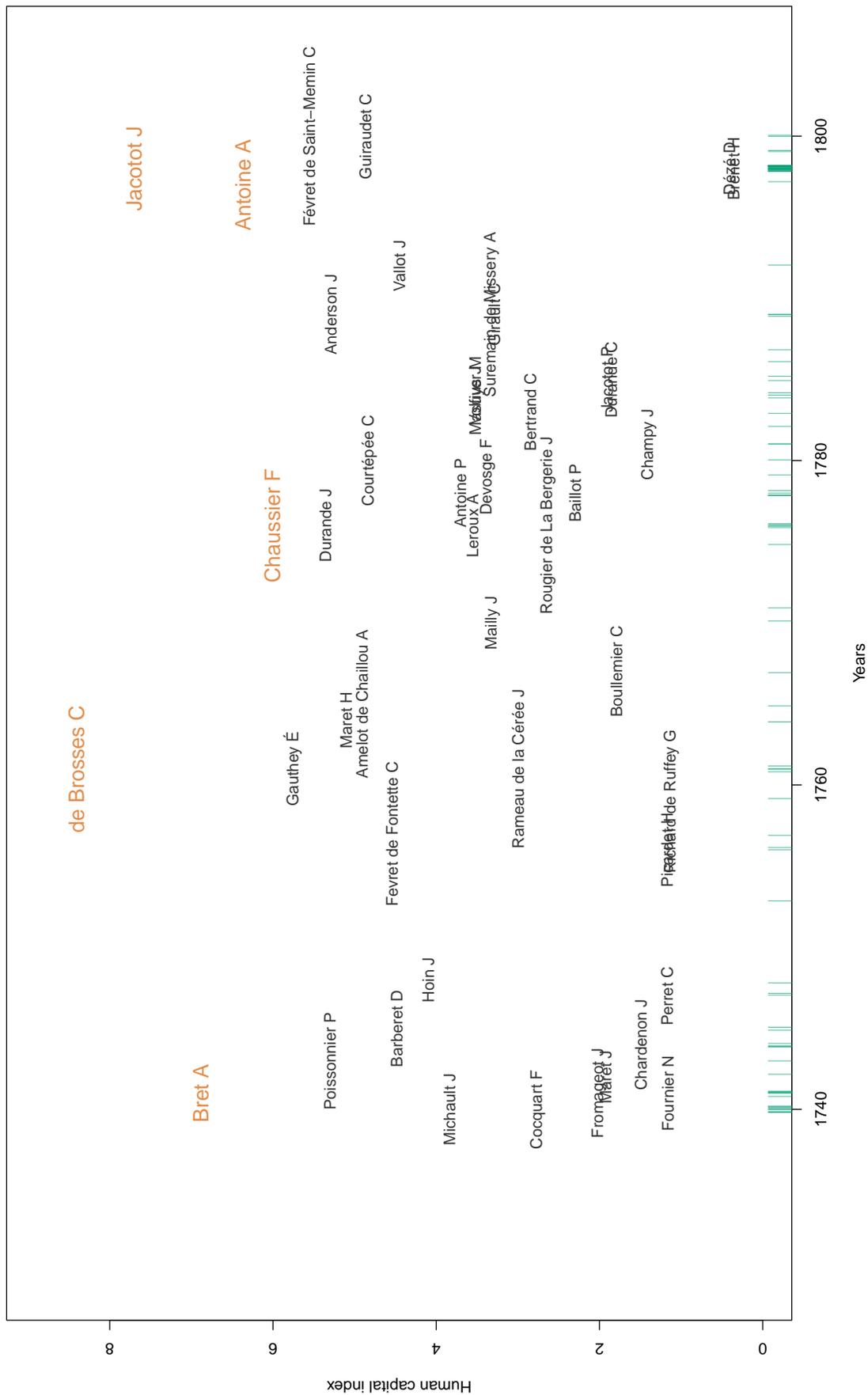


Figure 4: Famous scholars at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon

Antoine Antoine (1744 Auxonne – 1818 Chenove) was a French civil engineer. He started his career as an engineer of bridges in the Estates General of Burgundy and then in the department of Côte-d’Or before becoming a justice of the peace in the cantons of Dijon. He became a resident member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon on June 19, 1798. He did not have an extensive education, but he was described as “a man of great wit and reading ability” by Claude Nicolas Amanton (who was an archaeologist, poet, and scholar, and a fellow member of the Academy). He wrote several works defending his region including “Mémoire sur la navigation supérieure de la Saône, considérée relativement à la Digue des moulins de la ville d’Auxonne”. He published under the pen name Binossil which comes from *Bis nomen simile*, meaning “two similar names” in Latin, a wordplay on his own name. He used this name to avoid being well known and recognized.

Chaussier François (1746 Dijon – 1828 Paris) was a French surgeon and anatomist. After studying in Dijon, he continued his study of medicine and surgery in Paris. He settled in Dijon in 1768. The following year, he started giving anatomy lectures. His reputation quickly spread beyond Burgundy; he made a name for himself at the Académie de Chirurgie and was awarded the academy’s Gold Medal at the public session of April 10, 1777. He was awarded a doctorate in medicine from the University of Besançon on January 14, 1780, and in 1784, he became a correspondent of the Société royale de médecine. He became an associated member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon on August 14, 1776, and on May 6, 1823, he was admitted to the Académie des Sciences. Among others, he wrote “Les tables synoptiques, Manuel médico-légal des poisons, précédé de considérations sur l’empoisonnement and Recueil de mémoires, consultations, et rapports sur divers objets de médecine légale” (on the subject of poisons).

8 RELATED SCHOLARS

In addition to the ordinary members, several individuals were linked to the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon through a foreign or corresponding membership status. The scholars shown here belong to this category. These scholars are included in the calculations for all figures but Figure 4.

François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire (Paris 1664 – Paris 1778). For short bibliographical information see, De La Croix (2022). He was elected to the Dijon Academy on April 3, 1761.

Jean-Philippe Rameau (Dijon 1683 – Paris 1764) was a French composer and music theorist. Rameau considered to be one of France’s most eminent musicians and is recognized as the pioneering theorist of classical harmony. His father taught him music and he knew notes before he could even read (which was not uncommon at the time). He studied briefly at the Jesuit college of Godrans. He was intelligent but nothing interested him outside of music. The effects of his hastily concluded general studies became apparent in his lacking written expression later on. While his father wanted him to become a magistrate, Jean-Philippe Rameau firmly resolved to follow the path of a musician. His father sent him to Italy to complete his musical education, but Rameau did not go further than Milan and stayed there only for a few months. He created much of his music at the Royal Academy of Music in Paris and he joined the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon on May 22, 1761.

Antoine Lavoisier (Paris 1743 – Paris 1794). For short bibliographical information, see De la Croix and Zanardello (2022). He joined the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon on November 12, 1789.

Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon (Montbard 1707 – Paris 1788) was a student of the Jesuit college in Dijon at the age of 10. More bibliographical information in De la Croix and Delvaux (2023).

Nicolas de Condorcet (Ribemont 1743 – Paris 1794) was a French mathematician, philosopher, politician, and publisher, representing the Enlightenment. For short bibliographical informa-

tion, see De la Croix and Zanardello (2022). He joined the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon on February 28, 1793, just before its dissolution.

William Herschel (Hanover 1738 – Slough 1822) He was a German-British polymath, equally adept as an astronomer and a composer. His early musical training was provided by his father, a skilled violinist and oboist. In 1756, he and his elder brother were summoned to Great Britain to aid in repelling the French invasion during the Seven Years' War. Their journey led them to participate in the Battle of Hastenbeck, where the horrors of war profoundly affected him. Troubled by the violence he had witnessed, he made the fateful decision to desert the military and establish a permanent residence in England. His true passion lay in the night skies. As an amateur astronomer, he faced challenges in procuring a telescope, leading him to construct one himself using a series of large concave bronze mirrors. On the night of March 13, 1781, while endeavoring to measure stellar parallax, he made a groundbreaking discovery – the planet Uranus. Initially mistaking it for a comet or a distant stellar object, this marked the first planetary discovery since Antiquity. His revelation catapulted him to fame virtually overnight. He was a member of several academies including the Royal Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, the Turin Academy of Sciences. He joined the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon on June 17, 1786.

Gaspard Monge (Beaune 1746 – Paris 1818) was a French mathematician and politician. He studied at the Oratorian College of Beaune with his two brothers. There, he received a liberal education from the clergy, as in addition to the humanities, he was educated in history, natural sciences, and mathematics. He was a brilliant student, to the point that the director described him as a “*puer aureus*” (= golden child). Through the correspondence that Monge had with various mathematical figures, including Alexandre-Théophile Vandermonde, he further developed his expertise in analytical and differential geometry. He wrote 6 memoirs which he presented for the most part at the Paris Academy of Sciences and the Turin Academy of Sciences. He established the principles that would guide his research in differential geometry, differential equations, and integral calculus. He collaborated with Berthollet, Chaptal, and Laplace in establishing the *École d'arts et métiers*. He was also one of the founders of the *École polytechnique*, along with Lamblardie and Carnot. He was a member of several academies including the Turin Academy of Sciences, the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Sciences, and the Philomatic Society of Paris. He joined the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon in 1788.

9 VICTIMS OF THE REVOLUTION

The French Revolution was probably the most deadly event for academics over the 1000-1800 period. Not only was every academy and university shut down in 1793, but a large number of scholars were arrested, jailed, and sentenced to death. We list the members of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon who were victims of the Revolution, beyond the cases of Lavoisier, Condorcet, and Amelot de Chaillou, already described in De la Croix and Zanardello (2022).

Antoine Allut was both a scholar and a politician. In 1794, he was arrested and brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal, which sentenced him to death 'as a federalist, for approving the oppressive writings of the traitor Rabaut Saint-Étienne' (another revolutionary having chosen the wrong side).

Louis Le Peletier de Rosambo held the position of *Président à Mortier* in the Parliament of Paris, hence he was one of the main magistrates in one of the highest judicial institutions. He was guillotined in Paris on the 1st of Floréal in the Year II (April 20, 1794), two days before his wife.

Jean Chrysostome Larcher was a Breton aristocrat, a military officer, and a philosopher. His writings, imbued with ideas deemed counter-revolutionary, justified his arrest. Brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal, he was convicted of conspiracy in connection with the enemies of the Peo-

ple and the Nation and sentenced to death by beheading (Paris, 1794).

10 FINAL THOUGHTS

The Academy of Sciences and Arts of Dijon was a provincial academy that successfully established a distinguished roster of renowned corresponding members.

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Homepage: <https://perso.uclouvain.be/david.delacroix/uthc.html>

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Database: <https://shiny-lidam.sipr.ucl.ac.be/scholars/>

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