

Scholars and Literati at the University of Olomouc (Olmütz) (1570–1778)

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This note is a summary description of the set of scholars and literati who taught at the University of Olomouc (Universitas Olomucensis) from its earliest days to the dissolution of the Jesuit order (1778). The city in which the university was located is called Olomouc in Czech and Olmütz in German.

1 SOURCES

We used two main sources to compile the list of professors: Navrátil (1973) and Fechtnerová (1993). Navrátil (1973) volume was an official publication to mark 400 years of the University of Olomouc. It contains a detailed institutional history with particular emphasis on the Jesuit period, including extensive lists of professors, curricula, and archival references. Its strengths lie in its synthesis of local archival material, its role as the first comprehensive history of the university, and its record of the personnel and structure of Jesuit education in Moravia. However, it has significant limitations in its record of the context in which the University of Olomouc evolved: it was written under late-socialist historiographical constraints and its interpretation of the Counter-Reformation and the Habsburg monarchy is shaped by the ideological context of the time of publication (Fasora and Hanuš 2017). Fechtnerová (1993) is a comprehensive biographical dictionary of Jesuit rectors in the Czech lands and Silesia. Covering more than a thousand figures, it provides information on their careers, educational backgrounds, and contributions to Jesuit institutions. Its strengths lie in its systematic methodology, extensive archival research, and utility for prosopographical studies of Jesuit education. Limitations include its focus on rectors, which may overlook other significant Jesuit figures, its geographical scope, which is restricted to the Czech lands and Silesia, and its temporal cutoff at the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773.

2 THE UNIVERSITY

Olomouc University, today Palacký University, was founded in 1573 when Emperor Maximilian II granted university privileges to the Jesuit college established in the city a few years earlier. Its creation was closely tied to the Catholic Counter-Reformation in Moravia, where Protestant ideas had gained strong ground. The Bishop of Olomouc, William Prusinovský, invited the Jesuits in 1566, entrusting them with the mission to strengthen Catholic education and consolidate Habsburg influence in the region.

The university quickly became a center for training clergy and administrators loyal to Catholic orthodoxy. Its curriculum followed the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum*, emphasizing philosophy, theology, rhetoric, and classical languages. Intellectual life was marked by disputations, public lectures, and performances that combined scholarly rigor with religious devotion. The institution's reach extended beyond Moravia, attracting students from neighboring lands such as Silesia, Poland, and Hungary.

During the turbulent seventeenth century, especially after the Battle of White Mountain, the university grew in prestige, contributing to the re-Catholicization of the Bohemian lands. Scholars such as Jan Amos Komenský studied there briefly, while Jesuit professors engaged with both scholastic and emerging scientific traditions. By the eighteenth century, Enlightenment reforms and the suppression of the Jesuit order in 1773 transformed the university, marking the end of its strictly Jesuit era. With the abolition of the Jesuit order the university was nationalized and quickly transformed into a simple Lyceum.

Period	no. obs	birth date	known place	mean age at appoint.	mean age at death	med. dist. birth-univ.	with Wiki.	with VIAF
1527–1617	49	98%	81.6%	36.8	65.1	439	12.2%	16.3%
1618–1685	150	95.3%	87.3%	36.5	59.5	189	10.7%	27.3%
1686–1733	142	92.3%	91.5%	37	61.1	188	7%	29.6%
1734–1800	168	84.5%	83.3%	38	61.5	152	14.3%	32.1%
1200–1800	509	91.2%	86.6%	37.1	60.9	177	11%	28.5%

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

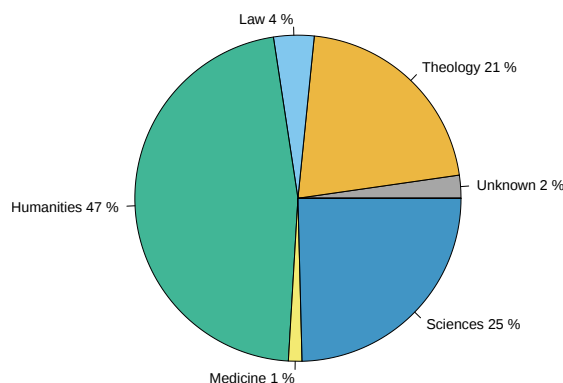


Figure 1: Broad fields at the University of Olomouc (all scholars)

3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics. The dataset includes information on 509 scholars. The information available (birth place, birth year) is of high quality. The longevity is low, around 60 years. This is a result we often find for the Jesuits: many Jesuits – unlike most professors – were routinely exposed to hazards that increase their mortality (De la Croix and Licandro 2015). The median distance between professors’ places of birth and the university is decreasing over time, which is a pattern we find in many other places.

Finally, the percentage of the scholars who have a Wikipedia page (in some language), or who have left a footprint in the library catalogs of the world, is lower than in the full sample of university professors. For Wikipedia in particular, Olomouc is well below the average for universities (11% compared to 18.3%).

4 FIELDS

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of teaching disciplines. This is a standard pattern for a Jesuit institution, with humanities and theology dominating, a particularly small share for law and no

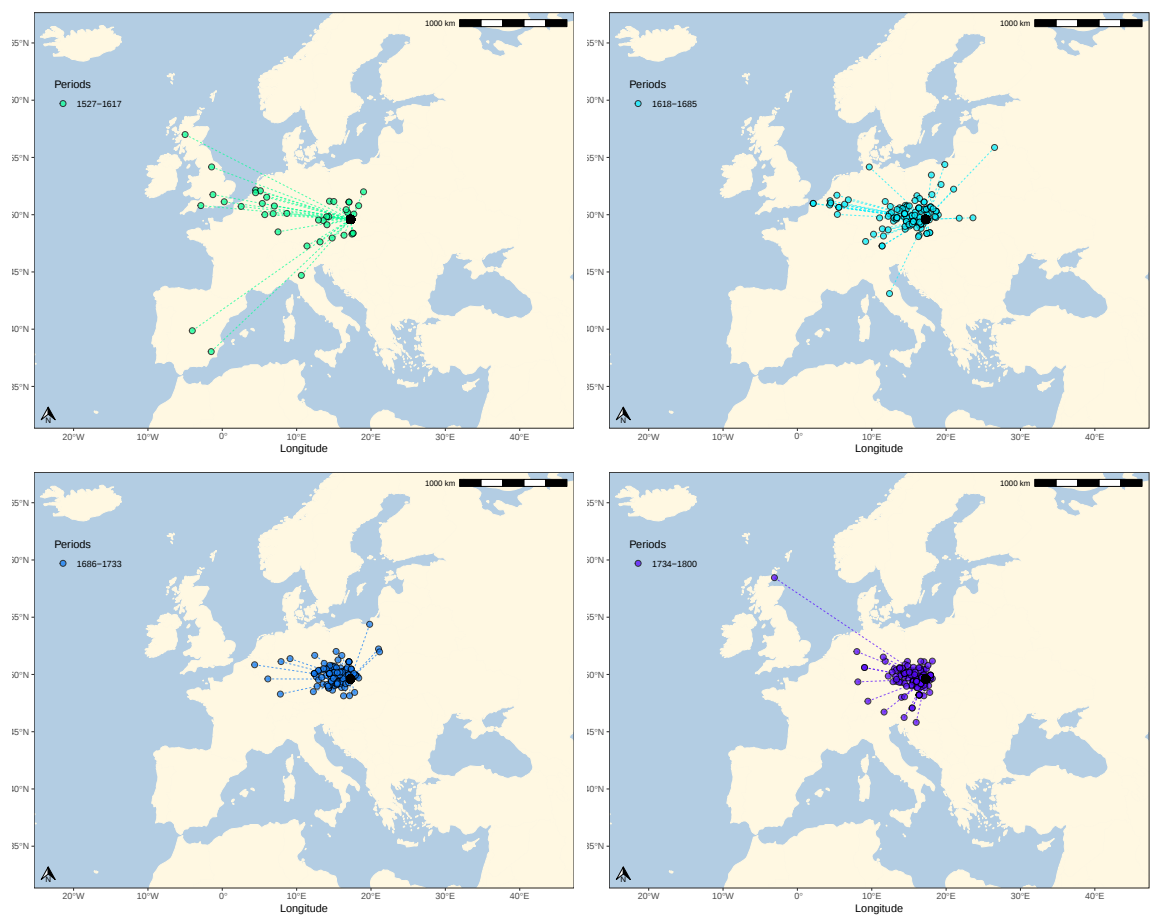


Figure 2: Places of birth of the scholars and literati at the University of Olomouc

medicine. There is a relatively high share of sciences, which is due to a high number of mathematics teachers.

5 PLACES OF BIRTH

Figure 2 displays the documented birthplaces for the scholars who were active at the University of Olomouc by period. The recruitment is quite international, in particular in the first period (bearing in mind that distance between place of birth and Olomouc is particularly high in this period). Professors came from the British Isles, and the Holy Roman Empire. A few came from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the East.

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 VIAF and Wikipedia, using principal component analysis. We also compute the notability of the university at each date by averaging the human capital of the five best scholars active in Olomouc 25 years before that date. The details are given in De la Croix et al. (2024) and Curtis et al. (2025). Figure 3 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index. The orange line displays the notability of the university, based on how well-published its top scholars were.

We begin by noting that Olomouc did not lack scholars of high human capital. However, because Jesuits typically spent their careers moving among different colleges and universities, each individual contributed less to the institution's distinct reputation than was the case at non-Jesuit universities. The university's notability grew steadily from its foundation, reaching a peak around 1725, after which it declined. Toward the end of the period under consideration, there was a revival, driven in part by professors who took up positions following the expulsion of the Jesuits.

7 TOP 6 PROFESSORS

We now provide a brief overview of the six professors with the highest human capital index.

Adam Adamandy Kochański (Dobrzyń nad Wisłą 1631 – Teplice 1700) was a Polish Jesuit mathematician, philosopher, and scientist known for his work in geometry, mechanics, and clock-making. A prominent intellectual of the 17th century, he corresponded with leading scholars across Europe and served as court mathematician to the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I. Kochański studied and later taught at several Jesuit institutions, including Olomouc University, where he contributed to the early development of scientific education. Kochański was particularly interested in problems of squaring the circle and practical applications of mathematics. He is best remembered for devising Kochański's approximation of π .

Johann Jahn (Tasswitz 1750 – Vienna 1816) was a Moravian Jesuit theologian and orientalist, noted for his pioneering yet controversial contributions to biblical scholarship. He studied philosophy at the University of Olomouc, then theology at Bruck Abbey, where he took monastic vows in 1774 and celebrated his first Mass in 1775. Returning to the abbey as teacher of Oriental languages and biblical hermeneutics, he earned doctorates in theology and philosophy. After Joseph II's reforms dissolved his abbey, Jahn became a professor at Olomouc and later at the University of Vienna, where his innovative biblical methods drew both acclaim and suspicion. Branded at times a "heretic," he was quietly removed from teaching in 1806 and made canon of St. Stephen's Cathedral. His works remained influential for many years after publication, though some were placed on the Index in 1822.



Georg Schönberger (Schomberger) (Innsbruck 1596 – Olomouc 1645) was a German Jesuit mathematician and educator. He studied at the University of Ingolstadt under the astronomer Christoph Scheiner and entered the Society of Jesus in 1615. Schönberger taught at Freiburg im Breisgau before moving to Bohemia, where he became vice-rector of the Jesuit college in Prague. Later he was appointed rector of the University of Olomouc, a position he held until his death. His writings dealt with the construction of sundials and questions of optics, reflecting the Jesuit interest in practical and theoretical science. In recognition of his contributions, the lunar crater Schomberger was named after him in 1935.

Christian Ludwig (Mimon 1660 – Kłodzko 1728) was a German Jesuit lexicographer and translator, remembered for compiling two pioneering bilingual dictionaries that included English. His Dictionary of English, German, and French (1706) and the larger Teutsch-Englisches Lexicon (1716) marked the first systematic efforts in Germany to respond to a growing demand for English. Rather than simply translating, Ludwig adapted earlier French and Italian models, restructuring entries and adding illustrative examples drawn from his own teaching practice. Ludwig studied at the University of Olomouc, where he absorbed humanist scholarship that later shaped his lexicographic method. He taught in Olomouc in 1700. Anecdotally, he recalled that certain English terms baffled even fellow scholars in Olomouc (English was still new in Central Europe at the time).

Jan Miller (Wilmsdorf 1650 – Liběšice 1723) was a Silesian Jesuit theologian, historian, and academic leader. He entered the Society of Jesus in Olomouc in 1669 and studied philosophy and theology at the University of Olomouc. Throughout his career, he held a succession of leadership roles. He serves as rector of Jesuit colleges in Kłodzko, Cheb, Jihlava, Brno, and notably Olomouc (1711-1715) as well as provincial superior of the Bohemian Jesuits (1703-1707). His most significant literary work is *Historia provinciae Bohemiae Societatis Iesu ab anno 1555 usque ad annum 1723*, alongside numerous other writings on Jesuit institutional history. During his tenure as rector in Olomouc, he is said to have taken a special interest in the construction of the Jesuit college church of Our Lady of the Snow.

Matthias Tanner (Pilsen 1630 – Prague 1692) was a Bohemian Jesuit theologian, educator, and writer. Born in Pilsen, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1646. He briefly taught in Olomouc in 1660, but spent much of his career in Prague. There, he taught humanities, philosophy, theology, and Scripture; served as rector of the imperial university, and led the Bohemian Jesuit province for six years. Tanner penned vivid Jesuit hagiographies, including *Societas Iesu ad sanguinis et vitae profusionem militans* and *Societas Iesu Apostolorum Imitatrix*, inspired by a desire to motivate his brethren by recounting the lives of heroic Jesuits. Anecdotally, his celebrated reverence during the Mass was said to be so compelling that worshippers were drawn to the altar as if drawn by a lodestone.

8 UNIVERSITY NETWORK

Following De la Croix and Morault (2025), our assumption is that a professor's involvement in multiple universities throughout their career establishes a link between those institutions. We present the universities that were connected to the University of Olomouc during each period in Figure 4.

The network is composed of Jesuit colleges (Brno) and universities (Trnava), or universities where Jesuits have a strong influence, such as Prague.

9 FINAL THOUGHTS

The University of Olomouc was an important university in central Europe. Emerging from a Jesuit college, it grew into a notable center of learning in humanities, theology, and mathematics. It disappeared soon after the dissolution of the Jesuit order.

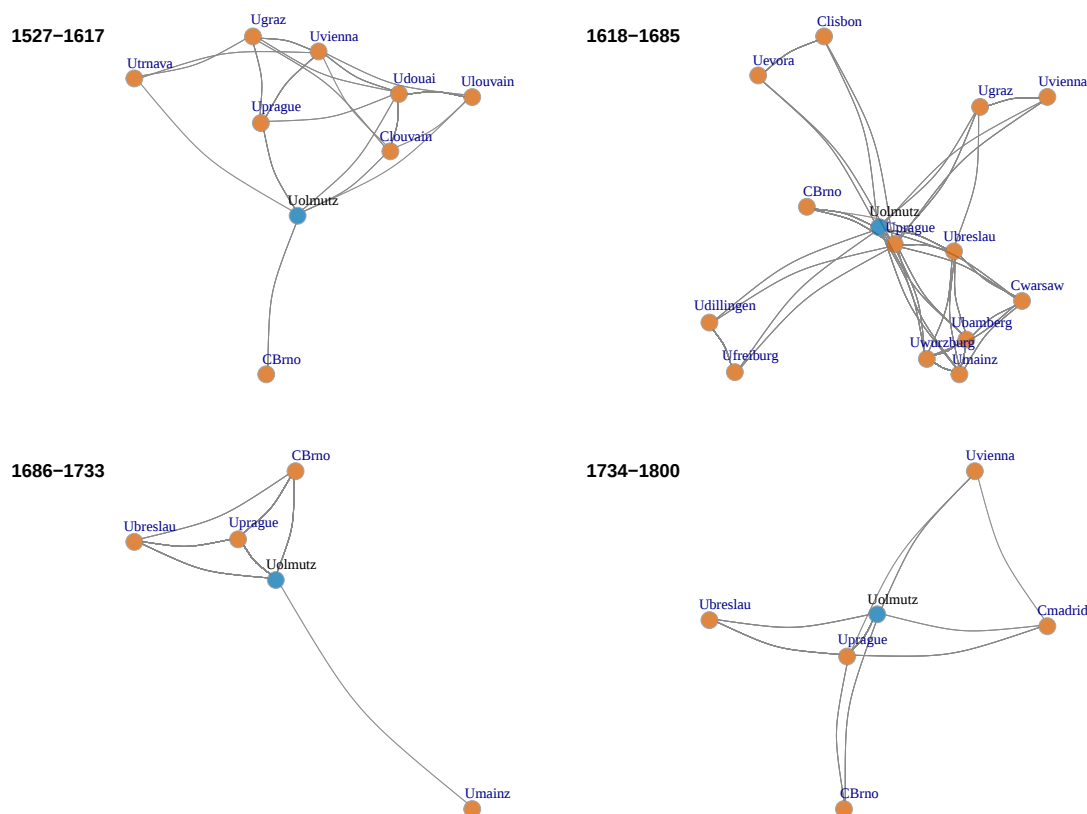


Figure 4: Links between Olomouc and other universities through scholars' mobility by period

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

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