

JOHANNES STÖFFLER and JACOB PFLAUM, *Almanach nova plurimis annis venturis inservientia* (New Almanac Devoted to Very Many Years to Come)

In Latin (with some German), imprint on paper with added manuscript sections on paper  
Venice, Lucantonio Giunta, 5 May 1522

*In-4o format, 164 folios on paper interleaved with four folios of blank paper before each almanac year (38 + iv + 14 + iv + 14 + iv + 14 + iv + 14 + iv + 14 + iv + 14 + iv + 14 + iv + 14 + iv + 14 + xv), complete (collation A-B<sup>s</sup>, C<sup>p</sup>, D<sup>o</sup>, 1523-1531<sup>4a</sup>), quires signed A-D, and then 1523-1531, printed in Gothic type, title in red and black with printer's device in red on sig. A1 (this device, K623-K223 in EDIT16, see Online Resources), eight woodcut ornamental initials in the text, two woodcut diagrams in the text (sigs. B1 recto and B7 recto), five eclipse woodcuts in the tables (sigs. 1523-II recto, 1525-II recto, 1526-II recto, 1529-II recto, and 1530-II recto), numerous tables, annotation to the imprint (see sig. C9 recto) in the same sixteenth-century cursive hand that added horoscopes, a weather figure (f. i verso), and extensive notes to the blank leaves, as well as inscriptions on sig. 1531-XIV verso and in the lower corner of the inside lower cover, sixteenth-century VELLUM VOLVELLE, inside front cover, slight dampstaining in the lower gutter of the final quire, slight worming in the two final quires, otherwise in unusually pristine condition. Bound in sixteenth-century white, blind-stamped half pigskin over wooden boards, beveled along the fore-edge between two fore-edge clasps with brass fittings and leather straps (lower clasp intact, upper clasp partially lacking), sewn on three raised binds, inscription, "Stöffler & Pflaum / Almanach / Venedig / 1522," in black ink on spine, "ALMANACH" written in brown ink on upper fore-edge, some handsoiling of pigskin, upper corner of lower board chipped, slight worming in both boards. Dimensions 206 x 150 mm.*

In its Renaissance binding, this hybrid book from the Age of Discovery includes extensive manuscript additions to a rare imprint, an edition of an Almanac best known for setting off a widespread apocalyptic panic in the early decades of the century. Customized in this way, the book reveals how an early sixteenth-century owner (an astrologer-cleric?) transformed a popular printed work into a scientific tool for his own use. Added horoscopes, a meteorological diagram, substantial written notes, and a working volvelle testify to the kinds of knowledge the book's early owner sought in the stars.

## PROVENANCE

1. This edition of the *Almanach nova* was printed in Venice in 1522 by Lucantonio Giunta: "In edibus Luceantonij de Giunta florentini Impresse Anno. 1522. Uenetijs" (sig. D10 recto). A further note at the end of the included tables (ephemerides) gives a more precise date for the completion of the imprint: "Uenetijs mandato et expensis nobilis viri Luceantonij de giunta florentini Anno domini. 1522. Die .5. maij [5 May 1522]" (sig. 1531-XIV recto).
2. The imprint was placed in its present binding by a nearly contemporary German owner who customized the book with written and diagrammatic additions of his own, as well as a vellum volvelle (see Text section). In light of the dates of the earliest horoscopes drawn by the owner, it seems probable that he was adding to the volume in 1526 or earlier. The owner may have been a cleric; astrology and instrumentation were popular among southern Germany clerics in the early sixteenth century. This owner appears to

have recorded the imprint's price; a note on what would have been the back of the imprint, sig. 1531-XIV verso, reads "Cost [sic] 6 soldi."

3. On the inside front cover, there is an as yet unidentified printed early twentieth-century(?) ex libris in black and red that appears to combine symbols of Earth(?) and Saturn with the initials "SC."
4. Typed description pasted on inside lower cover and modern pencil inscriptions on inside upper and lower cover, many partially erased.
5. Belonged to Hans Steinwachs; sold as no. 60 in *Bibliothek Hans Steinwachs*, vol. 1, Bern, Gutekunst and Klipstein, 11 and 12 June 1934 (p. 8 of this catalogue). A pencilled note on the inside front cover confirms this identification: "Ex Bibliothek Steinwachs – No. 60."
6. Belonged to Hanns-Theo Schmitz-Otto (1908-1992), bookseller and collector based in Cologne; his bookplate pasted on the inside front cover.

## TEXT

sig. A1 recto, [Title-page] *Almanach noua plurimis annis venturis inseruientia: Per Joannem Stoefflerinum Justingensem et Jacobum Pflaumen Ullmensem accuratissime supputata et toti fere Europe dextro sydere impartita. Novissime recognita: cunctique mendis expurgata.* 1522; [sig. A1 verso, blank];

sig. A2 recto-verso, [dedication and preface] *Reuerendis in christo patris et dominis: Domino Danieli pontifici Bellinensi Suffraganeo episcopatus Constantiensis dignissimo ...*; incipit, "EXistimare necesse est optimi maximi dei miro prorsus altiusque ... Ex Ulma Idibus februarys Anno christi domini millesimo quadringentesimo nonagesimo nono";

sig. A3 recto-sig. B8 recto, *Joannis de monte regio Germanorum decoris: etatis Astronomorum principis: cum additionibus Joannis Stoefflerini Justingensis et Jacobi Pflaum Ullmensis Alemanorum: in Ephemerides aut diurnales commentarium feliciter incipit*, incipit, "USum Ephemeridis cuiuslibet breuiter exponemus ... alieque electiones propemodum innumere in plerisque locis tractate sint et quidem abundissime Lector Uale"; [sig. B8 verso, blank];

sig. C1 recto, [Title-page] *Canon de domibus celi fabricandis.*; [sig. C1 verso, blank];

sig. C2 recto-verso, *Canon de domibus celi fabricandis*, incipit, "DUodecim domos celi secundum modum commodiorem quem rationalem dicimus facili me construere ... comprehendit tandem vaticinare effectus futuros res nature secretissimas et profecto miratu dignissimas. Lector Uale. *Tabula proportionum celi domibus erigendis commoda vna cum tabella Quatuor minorum temporis post tabulas domorum apparebunt.*";

sig. C3 recto-sig. D9 verso, tables;

sig. D10 recto, [Explicit and register] *Finis. Laus deo optimo: maximoque. Canones siue declarationes in diaria celestium motuum: a clarissimis viris germanis: Joanne de monte regio: Joanne stoefflerino: et Jacobo pflaum edite.*

*Ad commune bonum et commodu. E nouo quam emendatissime. In edibus Luceantonij de Giunta florentini Impresse Anno. 1522. Uenetijs.*; [sig. D10 verso, blank];

sig. 1523-I recto [preceded by four inserted leaves, all blank], [Title-page] *Ephemerides anno salutifere incarnationis. 1523*; [sig. 1523-I verso, blank];

sig. 1523-II recto-sig. 1523-XIV recto, tables; [sig. 1523-XIV verso, blank];

sig. 1524-I recto [preceded by four inserted leaves, all blank], [Title-page] *Ephemerides anno salutigere incarnationis. 1524*; [sig. 1524-I verso, blank];

sig. 1524-II recto-sig. 1524-XIV recto, tables; [sig. 1524-XIV verso, blank];

sig. 1525-I recto [preceded by four inserted leaves, all blank], [Title-page] *Ephemerides anno virginei partus. 1525*; [sig. 1525-I verso, blank];

sig. 1525-II recto-sig. 1525-XIV recto, tables; [sig. 1525-XIV verso, blank];

sig. 1526-I recto [preceded by four inserted leaves, containing three horoscopes drawn in sixteenth-century hand, along with ruled and segmented square for another], [Title-page] *Ephemerides anno dominice incarnationis. 1526*; [sig. 1526-I verso, blank];

sig. 1526-II recto-sig. 1526-XIV recto, tables; [sig. 1526-XIV verso, blank];

sig. 1527-I recto [preceded by four inserted leaves, containing two horoscopes drawn in sixteenth-century hand, along with six ruled and segmented squares for more], [Title-page] *Ephemerides anno salutifere incarnationis. 1527*; [sig. 1527-I verso, blank];

sig. 1527-II recto-sig. 1527-XIV recto, tables; [sig. 1527-XIV verso, blank];

sig. 1528-I recto [preceded by four inserted leaves, all blank], [Title-page] *Ephemerides anno salutigere incarnationis. 1528*; [sig. 1528-I verso, blank];

sig. 1528-II recto-sig. 1528-XIV recto, tables; [sig. 1528-XIV verso, blank];

sig. 1529-I recto [preceded by four inserted leaves, all blank], [Title-page] *Ephemerides anno virginei partus. 1529*; [sig. 1529-I verso, blank];

sig. 1529-II recto-sig. 1529-XIV recto, tables; [sig. 1529-XIV verso, blank];

sig. 1530-I recto [preceded by four inserted leaves, all blank], [Title-page] *Ephemerides anno dominice incarnationis. 1530*; [sig. 1530-I verso, blank];

sig. 1530-II recto-sig. 1530-XIV recto, tables; [sig. 1530-XIV verso, blank];

sig. 1531-I recto [preceded by four inserted leaves, all blank], [Title-page] *Ephemerides anno salutigere incarnationis. 1531*; [sig. 1531-I verso, blank];

sig. 1531-II recto-sig. 1531-XIV recto, tables; [sig. 1531-XIV verso, blank];

f. i verso [preceded by blank recto], diagram of a *Wetterfigur*;

ff. ii recto-iii recto, *Canon der Wetterfigur*, incipit, "Im diser figur ist zufinden, wie vnd nach was natur ain iedes Nuw[?] vnd volmen wirt ... bis vff viere vnd thü im dann als obstat";

f. iii verso, *Figur der witterung*, incipit, "Wilt du ain figur der witterung sezen vnd iudicieren so müst du 6 sachen mercken ... vnd den signa nach ains ieden natur so vil sy stercke hat"; [ff. iv recto-v verso, blank];

f. vi recto-verso, *Wie man am iegkliche figur vss dem Almanach calculieren vnd stellen soll*, incipit, "Wann du ain figur vff ain Natiuitet oder frag stellen willt ... die by den obgemelten aspecten vor oder nach mittag geschriben stond"; [f. vii recto, blank];

ff. vii verso-viii recto, *Wie man [symbol with an X superimposing a circle] pars[?] fortune werffen soll*, incipit, "In ainer iegklicher figur die by tag ist ... vnd thust im wie obgeschriben ist"; [f. viii verso, blank];

f. ix recto, incipit, "Wann du ain Reuolution machen willt ... so thur ich so uil darzu [...?]; [ff. ix verso-xv recto, blank];

f. xv verso, incipit, "Aller planeten motus so im almanach begriffen sollend ... Retrogradus [...?] directus adde".

The 1522 edition of the *Almanach nova plurimis annis inventuris inservientia*, by Johannes Stöffler and Jakob Pflaum. Included in the *Almanach* are nine ephemerides, sets of tables giving the calculated positions of astronomical objects at regular intervals over a certain period of time. In this instance, the ephemerides cover the years 1523-1531. A sixteenth-century owner has added substantial manuscript material to the volume, including a volvelle, a complex chart, a number of horoscopes, and a manual for using the *Almanach*'s contents to calculate future meteorological and human events.

Stöffler and Pflaum's *Almanach nova* was first published in 1499 and had an extremely wide circulation; it was printed in seven further editions within twenty-five years of its first printing (USTC nos. 857575-79, 857581-82; see Online Resources). The 1522 edition is the eighth and latest edition listed in the USTC and copies of this edition are now relatively rare: we find only four listed in North American libraries. The 1522 edition was the only edition of the *Almanach* to be printed by Lucantonio Giunta (1457-1538), one of the first printers in Venice and founder of the prominent and prolific Giunta printing firm.

Johannes Stöffler (1452-1531) was born in Justingen, in Badem-Württemberg, and studied at the University of Ingolstadt. While a parish priest in Justingen, he devoted himself to his interests in astronomy, astrology, and the making of astronomical instruments and celestial globes. He later served as chair of mathematics and astronomy at the University of Tübingen, where

Protestant reformer and theologian Philip Melancthon and cosmographer Sebastian Münster numbered among his best known pupils.

Stöffler produced the *Almanach nova* with Jakob Pflaum of Ulm, an astronomer about whom less is known. They declared the work a continuation of ephemerides produced by Johannes Müller von Königsberg (1436-1476), better known now as Regiomontanus, who was an internationally renowned mathematician, astronomer, and astrologer. Stöffler and Pflaum's *Almanach* begins by instructing the reader how to use its many astronomical tables (the ephemerides) as well as how to construct a horoscope. For each year that is covered in the ephemerides, Stöffler and Pflaum also provided predictions of eclipses and the orientations of planets.

One prediction in particular garnered the *Almanach nova* a great deal of attention, both in the sixteenth century and in modern scholarship. Stöffler and Pflaum calculated sixteen planetary conjunctions in the watery sign of Pisces for February 1524 and thus predicted a period of tremendous, unprecedented change. Other astrologers, notably Luca Gaurico (1475-1558), responded with more specific predictions, including a massive deluge, earthquakes, epidemics, and the coming of a false prophet (Zambelli, 1986). These prognostications set off a heated dispute among astrologers, physicians, theologians, and philosophers, and brought about a widespread panic. People relocated in anticipation of the deluge, and a president of the parliament of Toulouse even built an ark on a mountaintop to weather the disaster. In the end, the weather of February 1524 was unremarkable – there was no flood – but the sensation triggered by the Stöffler-Pflaum prediction probably accounts in part for the *Almanach*'s numerous print runs over the first two decades of the sixteenth century.

An early owner's additions to this volume reveal how this copy of the *Almanach* was used around the time of the flood panic. The book's early owner had the volume bound with an abundance of unprinted leaves, to which he added considerable elaborations in German on the *Almanach*'s content. For example, he completed five horoscopes (and began seven more) for the years 1526 and 1527. In more substantial additions at the back of the book, he explained how to predict the weather and cast horoscopes, all with recourse to the book's printed information as well as his own additions. An impressive full-page circular diagram labeled *Wetterfigur* ("weather figure") accompanies his meteorological notes; its many fields include the hours of the day, the four classical elements (earth, water, air, and fire), the planets and their signs, the signs of the zodiac, and particular weather conditions (see f. i verso).

As befits the Age of Discovery, these additions make knowledge interactive and put passive repositories of information to work in pursuit of further scientific discovery. Probing the implications of this phenomenon, Suzanne Karr Schmidt writes that interactive scientific prints and diagrams "constituted an attempt to understand and control the user's environment" (*Altered and Adorned*, 2011, p. 73). The meteorological preoccupations of the *Almanach* and this volume's owner manifest an aspiration to such understanding and control, but nowhere is this more palpable in the volume than in the vellum volvelle attached by the book's owner to the inside of the front cover. This volvelle is a scientific tool, designed to determine planetary hours for each day of the week – that is, which hour of a given day is ruled by which planet. With fields drawn onto the pastedown (for the planets and their signs and for the days of the week) and onto a movable vellum disk (for the hours of the day, with the hours written in red counting 1-12 from sunrise, *Ortus solis*, and the hours written in brown counting 1-12 from sunset, *Occasus solis*), this

tool invites physical manipulation and interaction. These additions bear fascinating witness to the interests and priorities of an early reader of the *Almanach*, almost certainly an astrologer in his own right.

## LITERATURE

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Niccoli, Ottavia. *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990.

Schmidt, Suzanne Karr. "Georg Hartmann and the Development of Printed Instruments in Nuremberg," in *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Susan Dackerman, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Art Museums, 2011, pp. 268-315.

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Thorndike, Lynn. *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vols. 5 and 6: The Sixteenth Century, New York, Columbia University Press, 1941.

Zambelli, Paola. "Many Ends for the World: Luca Gaurico Instigator of the Debate in Italy and Germany," in *'Astrologi ballucinati': Stars and the End of the World in Luther's Time*, ed. Paola Zambelli, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1986, pp. 239-263.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

EDIT16, Censimento nazionale delle edizioni italiane del XVI secolo, Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico delle biblioteche italiane e per le informazioni bibliografiche  
[http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web\\_iccu/ihome.htm](http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web_iccu/ihome.htm)

"Stöffler, Johannes, *Almanach nova plurimis annis*," Universal Short Title Catalogue, University of St Andrews, 2015  
<http://ustc.ac.uk/index.php/record/857578>

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