

Access to electronic resources for the study of rare books:
the French situation

by

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Abstract

In France, as indeed in the whole world, numerous programs or initiatives have been launched during the last ten odd years to digitize ancient collections of manuscripts and early printed books. Most have been undertaken by libraries, as in the well-known case of *Gallica*, in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, usually with the help of public entities, be them local governments or ministries, others by research centers, in the Centre national de la recherche scientifique or in universities, some by individual scholars. What can historians of the book do with this abundant and very diverse material? A symposium organized in Lyon by ENSSIB in the winter of 1999 – *Pour une nouvelle erudition. La numérisation au service de l'histoire du livre* – was the occasion for a first « tour d'horizon » of research practices and questions. This communication will focus on the developments which occurred in 2000 and 2001, mainly the results of the EU sponsored DEBORA (Digitization of Books of the Renaissance) program, led by ENSSIB with twelve European partners.