



**Staatsbibliothek
zu Berlin**

Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Department of Early Printed Books

The Collection Libri impressi rari

Until early modern times, a prince's library was a veritable chamber of rarities. Apart from books it could also contain globes, coins, stones and minerals, as well as a haphazard accumulation of other curiosities. The following description refers to the Prince Elector's Palace in Berlin and the adjacent Lustgarten. The Library mentioned is the Kurfürstliche Bibliothek, founded in 1661: "... passing by various rooms, in which artistic clocks, rare antiquities, statues, numismatic items, naturalistic items, and models of all kinds of inventions are kept. Below these rooms is a large library filled with more than 80,000 printed and written rare books. It lies above the court pharmacy and the printing press. From there you can go into the garden, which is graced with all kinds of rare trees, plants, and a beautiful grotto and waterworks, too." (Hendreich. Derer die Marck zu Brandenburg betreffende Sachen, Erster Entwurff. 1682, Sig. D6).

The Prince Elector's Library was not a collection that was built up systematically. It came together more by chance through the addition of new acquisitions from time to time, such as presents to the Hohenzollern court. This collection of cimelia was the origin of the old collection of the precious libri impressi rari, which today comprises 336 volumes. The greater part, with 670 volumes, failed to return to the State Library after being relocated during the Second World War.

Among its treasures are copies of the Low German edition of the chapbook *Till Eulenspiegel*, printed in Cologne by Servais Kruffter in 1532, a translation of Luther's catechism and the first folio edition of Shakespeare printed in 1623.