One of the jewels of the collection of the Gadagne museum in Lyon is a July 1494 manuscript placard announcing the rules and privileges of the city’s four annual fairs.¹ The preceding June, the Lettres d’Auxonne of Charles VIII officially restored the fairs as originally authorized by Louis XI in 1463.² The city paid the king 10,000 livres in exchange, a transaction that offered a clear demonstration of Lyon’s growing role as a key lender to the French crown.³ The decorative splendour of the placard reflects the importance of its contents, and the city’s sense of triumph at having secured the restoration of the fairs. Each item begins with an illuminated initial, the title appears on a banner supported by lions, and the base of the document depicts angels connecting Lyon’s arms with the French royal arms and those of Anne de Bretagne. Obtaining an “irrevocable statute and edict” that confirmed all of its fairs secured Lyon’s position as a commercial capital.⁴ It guaranteed a flow of international trade through the city, which would, in turn, add momentum to the growing trend of important banks and firms establishing permanent offices there.⁵ Effectively, the

¹ Lyon, Musée Gadagne, Inv. 172.
⁴ AML HH 284: ‘statut et édit irrévocable’.
confirmation of the fairs was also a confirmation of Lyon’s status as France’s commercial and financial centre.

The Gadagne museum poster was part of the publication campaign for the new fair programme, paid for by the city council. More than just a prestige document, it was a piece of official communication, designed to hang in a public place. Its edges display tell-tale signs that come from being affixed to a wall: a series of nail holes and a defined border where a frame once protected part of the document from wear. Single-sheet announcements like this one formed an important part of the landscape of early modern cities. Municipal administrators across Europe used placards to communicate important information to city inhabitants and visitors, from new laws to political alliances. The consulat in Lyon publically exhibited the details of the fair privileges to act as a point of reference for the Lyonnais and for the foreign merchants upon whom Lyon’s economy depended.

The city council also published this and later editions of the Lyon fair privileges as pamphlets. The first of these was an undated, unsigned quarto pamphlet of only four leaves, printed ca. 1498/9. Although the gw attributes it to Mathias Huss, and gives its possible date as 1494, type analysis by Anatole Claudin identifies it as the work of Martin Havard, and suggests it was published some years later, after 1498. The next editions came much later, first with a commission for 536 copies, printed by Pierre Fradin in October of 1560, followed by a second by Antoine Gryphius in 1574. The consulat needed to reissue successive pamphlets not only because the list of privileges and regulations had expanded, but also because they needed to communicate to a wider audience. These two causes are interrelated; as the fairs grew in importance

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6 AML CC 53l.
7 AML CC 1022: the consulat paid for ‘une grant boyte fert blanc, pour mettre le privillege des fooyres, pour ce que celle où avoit esté mysl privillege avoit esté rompue’.
10 Grenoble, Bibliothèque Municipale, 1.241(1) Rés.
12 AML CC 1084, USTC 21621; AML CC 1230, USTC 24483.