The bookseller's catalogue of the House of Blaeu, published in 1659 when Dr. Joan Blaeu was managing the firm, well illustrates how a large book-importing and exporting business like this, with its numerous connections at home and abroad, contributed to the distribution of books. The varied nature of the contents is already evident from the title (See plate 1).

For this reason alone, such a catalogue, and certainly one as large as this, with its 312 pages, deserves the full attention of anyone studying the history of the booktrade, which is to say the intellectual and cultural history of man. Moreover, booksellers' catalogues from the Netherlands in the seventeenth century are a lot rarer than auction catalogues. This does not necessarily imply that such catalogues were not frequently used by publishers and booksellers in the Low Countries for furthering their business; it may simply mean than they were less often preserved. The explanation may be that auction sale catalogues of private libraries were bibliographically valuable and were liable to be held on to for a long time by scholars, particularly since certain categories of books in private collections were often deliberately accumulated. The contents of a catalogue put out by a firm of booksellers, on the other hand, tended to be far more random and heterogeneous. The most interesting thing about the Blaeu catalogue, however, is the way in which its arrangement and composition have been designed to serve both the firm itself and its clientele. Even a short bibliographical description shows this clearly.

The catalogue, an octavo edition, consists of five parts which, materially and

1 In 1961 I paid attention to this catalogue in connexion with a small exhibition organized on behalf of the Dr. P. A. Tiele-Stichting at Amsterdam. This study, which was intended for students and the public at large, was included in a booklet entitled 'In Officina Ioannis Blaeu' (Amsterdam 1961), together with an essay by Professor H. de la Fontaine Verwey on Blaeu's work. In the present article I have partly revised some of the sections which I thought would be of interest to the bibliographer and the historian of the book, and provided them with an introduction. The 1961 publication was reviewed by Harry Carter in The Library 5 Ser. Vol. xvi, No. 4, December 1961, pp. 309-10. In Pollard-Ehrman, The distribution of books by catalogues, Cambridge 1965, Graham Pollard placed the Blaeu catalogue in the framework required for the study of the kind of source it provides for the history of the book. Paradoxically enough, this edition, prepared as it was for members of the Roxburghe Club, fails by its very nature to feature in the distribution of books among scholars.

2 In the bibliographical apparatus for Dutch auction sale catalogues in the Institute for Neo-Philology and Neo-Latin at the University of Amsterdam, there are circa 2000 catalogues registered for the seventeenth century.

3 There are copies in Amsterdam, Univ. Libr.; Brussels, Royal Libr.; Copenhagen, Kgl. Bibl.; Edinburgh, Nat. Libr. (formerly Edinburgh Advocates); Oxford, three copies, one of
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Omnium facultatum & variarum linguarum,
Qui in
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IOANNIS BLAEV,
Venales reperiuntur.

AMSTELÆDAMI,
Apud JOANNEM BLAEV,
MDCLIX.

Plate 1