In fourteen essays, introduced by a preface providing definitions, categories of analysis and summaries, the collection of papers dedicated to the printers and booksellers of the age of humanism is already a reference book for anyone interested not only in humanism but also in History of the Book, history of the cities and networks and specific actors of the Italian, Flemish, or French Renaissance. Coming with an index of the proper names and a collection of abstracts, this volume is easy to use and full of precious information. In the wake of the ‘new’ history of the books, printers, and readers, written in the last decades by Henri-Jean Martin – the introduction begins with the mention of four conferences and collections of papers dedicated to the impact of Henri-Jean Martin’s L’apparition du livre, published for the first time in 1958 –, Roger Chartier, or again Frédéric Barbier, François Dupuis-Desroussilhes, Pierre Aquilon, and others, this collection of essays wisely gathers punctual studies involving general questions on the making of books and the transmission of texts in sixteenth century France, Flanders, Brittany, Anjou, and Northern Italy. With an exemplary methodology, demonstrating a research of the primary sources, a rigorous inventory of editions, a precise description of the books, the volume proposes more than a ‘tour’ of the question, it provides a detailed and vivid picture of the world of humanists and printers in the sixteenth century.

As the title of the book underlines it, the approach of the collection involves two questions of categorizations and definitions. ‘Passeurs de textes’, with a French phrase quite difficult to translate, evokes the actors of the printing his-
tory who made texts available to readers, including editors and translators, of course, but also printers, booksellers, commentators, manuscript providers and other roles. Literally, the phrase evokes the ‘middle-men’. In the context of the printed book, which is the mediation per excellence, middlemen seem to be everywhere, in many kinds and roles. Now, the frontier between actors and executors is a thin one when addressing the history of the book: as Jean-François Gilmont reminds us in the final paper, if ‘transmission’ is the category of the role of humanists, some printers are perfect emblematic figures of this humanism, starting with the learned printers such as the Estiennes (Robert I and Henri II). Although there is no possible contradiction that the great learned printers produce the text that put in print and circulate, the case is not as clear for printers who alter the existing texts in order to propose a new object, or who fulfill commands from patrons or institutions. The two papers, proposed respectively by Elise Rajchenbach-Teller and Michel Jourde, on Guillaume Rouillé and Jean de Tournes, both printers in Lyons, seem to dramatize this scientific point of definition: humanists or sophisticated craftsmen, these book-printers and book-sellers that made new texts available for new audiences at the end of the sixteenth century? By studying the catalogues of published books, the workshops and collaborators for more than sixteen printers, the modalities of their production of new editions, the networks of readers, correctors, buyers, and sellers, this book is, first of all, a major addition to the history of the book in France and Italy for the sixteenth century. Moreover, it is, by itself, a valid and persuasive answer to the question rose by its title: printers and booksellers are, indeed, major actors in the transmission of texts. Now, not all printers do play an important intellectual role and not all of them are humanists, although no humanist can build and find its audience without printers nor can access the reference texts without the ‘humanist printed edition’ of the Aldine collections or the Estiennes’ landmarks. The status of the ‘mechanical’ side of humanism is thus clearly addressed. In their implicit answer, the editors of the volume choose to complement the Brepols series Europa Humanistica which devoted several volumes to the ‘passeurs’ of Greek texts in France: by adding less known names of actors who are not always scholars, the essays here gathered give another face to humanism.

The volume develops in a timely and consistent fashion the stage of French, Flemish, and Italian humanisms. First, a paper by Alexandre Vanautgaerden on Robert de Keysere, friend and printer for Erasmus, shows the vanity of anachronistic national frontiers and the importance of figures that, hitherto, were given only secondary roles by historians. The second paper, by Louise Katz, explores with fascinating detail, the ambivalence of Josse Bade towards Erasmus and Lefèvre d’Etaples: both a supporter and printer to these evangeli-