

# Henri Basnage: the reluctant lexicographer

Geoffrey Williams

Emeritus Professor: Université Grenoble Alpes

[wiliamg@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](mailto:wiliamg@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr)

[geoffrey.williams@orange.fr](mailto:geoffrey.williams@orange.fr)

# Outline

- Inspiration
- The BasNum project : Digital humanities
- Digitising data: human and artificial intelligence
- Historical background
- The *Dictionnaire universel* and its genesis
- What the dictionary tells us

# In memory of John Sinclair

- The inspirer of my vision of language, a good friend
- From teaching to lexicography: history to history
- Aston University : Julian Edge, Peter Roe, Frank Knowles
- University of Nantes: Paul Boucher
- French research: François Rastier
- My friends and inspirers
  - Elena Tognini Bonelli, Sue Atkins, Patrick Hanks, Adam Kilgarriff

# Teaching and Research

- Dictionaries and the TEI
  - Exploring structure outside of the comfort zone
- Dictionaries and T-Lex
- Putting knowledge into practice
- Research driven teaching
  - Master's in Digital Publishing
  - Innovative publishing
  - Innovative document management

# Living and Learning: The EURALEX family

- EURALEX: an ever growing family
- Annette Klosa, Iztok Kosem and this invitation
- Frank Knowles: Founder and Past President
- Marie-Hélène Corréard and Thierry Fontenelle: The conspiracy
- Rosamund Moon, Ari Kernemen, Paul Bogaards, Michael Rundell ... : The board, and many of the speakers, Lars, Andrea, Zoe, Gilles-Maurice ...
- Janet Decesaris, Carla Marello, Tinatin Margalitadze: close friends in friendship and research
- EURALEX is a living family, so be active and keep it alive

# Why bother with the past?

- Lexicography is about solving problems,
- Looking at how others in a pre-technical age solved their problems will so as to shed light on ours
- Understanding the discipline and its evolution
- A window on the past
- Breaking out of a single world view
- Curiosity and culture
- Scholarship and its value

# French Destinies: You are not born a lexicographer, you become one

- Law to lexicography
  - Antoine Furetière (1619-1688)
    - Bourgeois, Lawyer, Novelist, Lexicographer
  - Henri Basnage de Beauval (1656-1710)
    - Legal nobility, Lawyer, Journalist, Lexicographer
- Furetière chose his path, the path chose Basnage
- « *Mrs. Leers me pressent fort de m'engager à la revision de leur dictionnaire de Furetiere. Je leur ay seulement promis d'en repasser quelques feuilles pour essayer mes forces.* »
- The Leers (publishers) encourage me strongly to accept to revise their Dictionary by Furetière. I have only promised to look at a few pages so as to test my strength.
- (Bots et Van Lieshout 1984: 113-114)

# The Dictionnaire universel: Encyclopaedic lexicography and the Hourglass effect



# The BasNum Project and its significance

- The project
  - Digitise the 1701 edition of the *Dictionnaire universel* as a fully encoded TEI-compliant document
  - Digitise the 1690; 1708 and 1725/27 editions as freely available text editions
- The leitmotiv - FAIR
  - Making data freely available to all
  - Assisting with Digital Humanities lexicography through good practice
  - Increasing awareness of key French legacy dictionaries
  - Developing historical perspectives from a lexicographical viewpoint

# A French National Funding Agency (ANR)project

- Litt & Arts research group at University of Grenoble –Alpes
  - Principle investigator : Geoffrey Williams
  - Encoding, digital and historical analysis, web access
- LATTICE research at Paris Sorbonne Nouvelle University
  - Lead researcher: Ioana Galleron
  - Encoding, digital and historical analysis,
- ALMANACH (Automatic Language Modelling and Analysis & Computational Humanities, Inria)
  - Lead researchers: Laurent Romary, Benoit Sagot, Mohamed Khemakhem
  - GROBID Dictionaries

# Digital Humanities and scholarship: The importance of people

- DH and analysis
- Scholarly input
  - Geoffrey Williams (Professor applied linguistics)
  - Ioana Galleron (Professor DH & XVII-XVIII Literature)
  - Doctoral student - Clarissa Stincone (Master EMLEX)
  - Historian post doc - Sara Graveleau

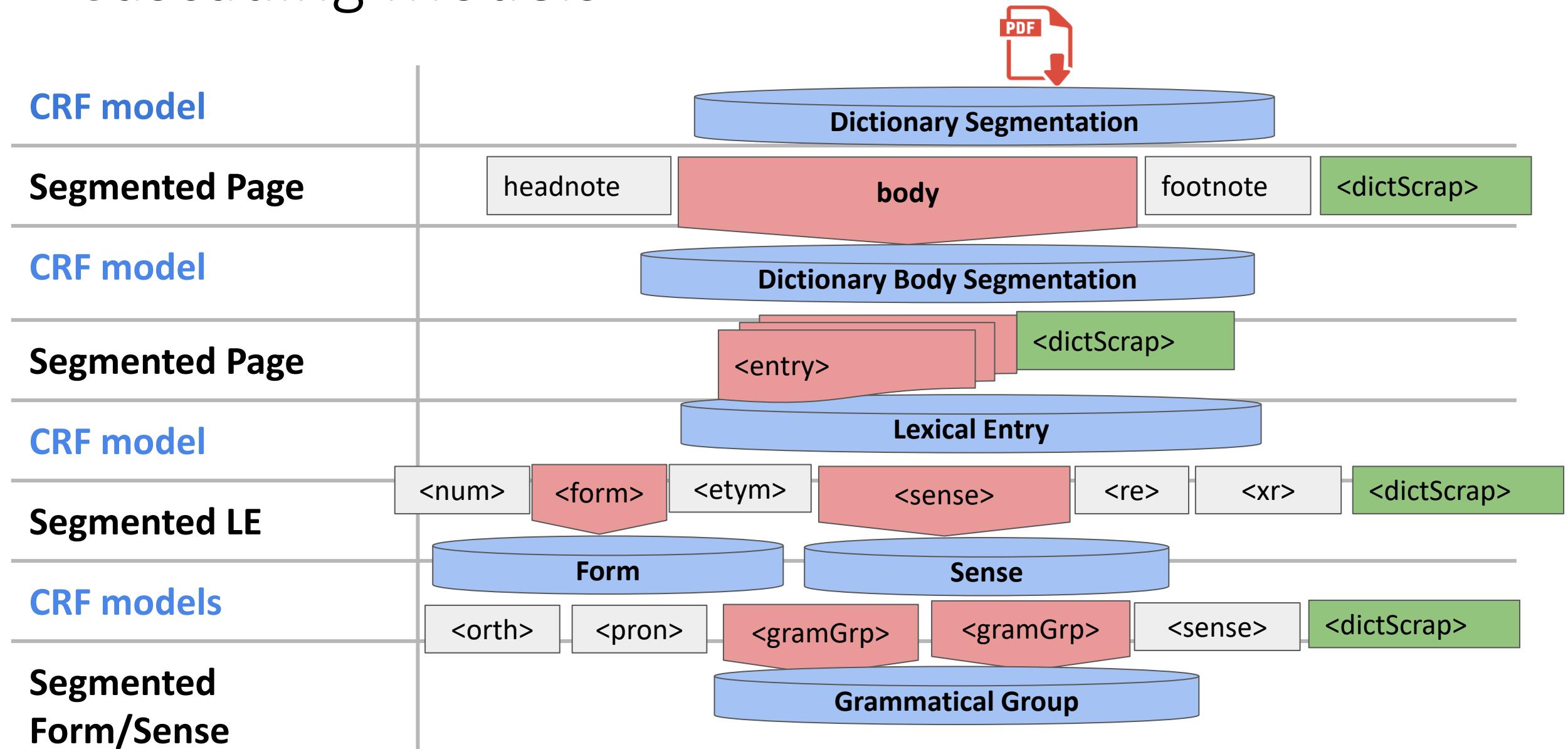
# Digital Humanities: Machine Learning and Artificial intelligence

- Manual or automatic data acquisition?
- Transkribus
  - Early versions couldn't handle many features so much training and manual correction
- GROBID Dictionaries
  - Machine learning for automatic TEI structuring
- TACT for Crowd correction
  - <https://tact.demarre-shs.fr>

# GROBID Dictionaries

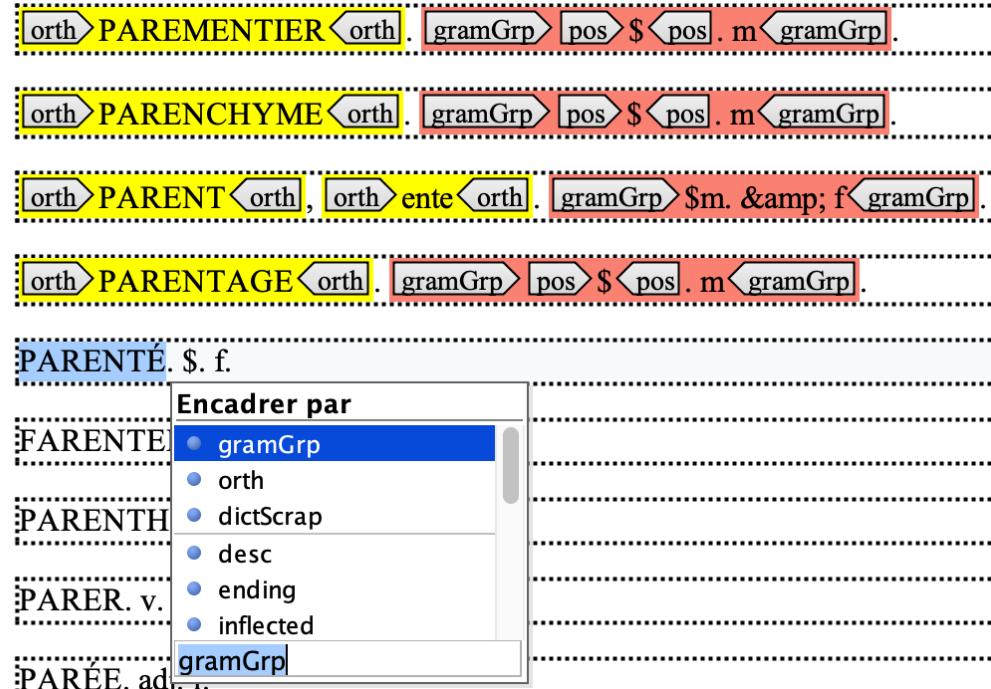
- Ordered Hierarchies of Content Objects
  - If a document is structured, and dictionaries have structure, GROBID can find and exploit the structure
  - But it needs training
- <https://grobid.readthedocs.io/en/latest/Introduction/>
- Multiple Steps
  - Creation of structured pdf
  - Training by level
- Not plug and play!

# Cascading Models



# Training the machine:form

```
xml-model href="form.rng" type="application/xml"
xmlstylesheet type="text/css" href="form.css" type="text/css"/>
tei "preserve"
• text
  • body PARENTIER. $. m.
    • form PARENTIER. $. m.
      • orth PARENTIER
      • gramGrp $. m
        • pos $
    • form PARENCHYME. $. m.
      • orth PARENCHYME
      • gramGrp $. m
        • pos $
    • form PARENT, ente. $m. & f.
      • orth PARENT
      • orth ente
      • gramGrp $m. & f.
    • form PARENTAGE. $. m.
      • orth PARENTAGE
      • gramGrp $. m
        • pos $
    • form PARENTÉ. $. f.
    • form FARENTELLE. $. fem.
```



TACT

Transcrire

Prévisualiser

Commentaires (0)

Relectures

Aide



```
<entry> <form> <form> <orth> COLARIN </orth> </form> <pc> . </pc> <gramGrp> <pos> s. </pos>
<gen> m. </gen> <gramGrp> </form> <sense> <usg> Terme d'Architecture </usg> <pc> . </pc>
<det> Frise du chapiteau de la colonne Toscane, & Dorique. On appelle aussi
<hi> colarin </hi>, le haut du vif de la colonne, & l'endroit le plus étroit, proche du
chapiteau<pc> . </pc> </def> </sense> </entry>
```

TEI:ENTRY » TEI:SENSE » TEI:DEF

Eléments disponibles

orgName ↑ ↓ ?

abbr ↑ ↓ ?

bibl ↑ ↓ ?

gloss ↑ ↓ ?

foreign ↑ ↓ ?

etym ↑ ↓ ?

note ↑ ↓ ?

persName ↑ ↓ ?

ref ↑ ↓ ?

quote ↑ ↓ ?

cit ↑ ↓ ?

i ↑ ↓ ?

lg ↑ ↓ ?

# Encoding People

```
</person>
<person xml:id="Abl_ISN0000000107866286">
  <persName>
    <forename>Nicolas</forename>
    <surname>Perrot d'Ablancourt</surname>
    <roleName/>
    <addName>Mr.</addName>
    <abbr>Abl</abbr>
  </persName>
  <birth when="1606-04-06">Né le 6 April 1606 à
    <placeName>Châlons-en-Champagne</placeName><country corresp="#FRE">
      France</country></birth>
  <death when="1664-11-17">17 novembre 1664 à <placeName>Paris</placeName><country
    corresp="#GBR">France</country></death>
  <gender>Masculin</gender>
  <nationality>Française</nationality>
  <faith>Protestant, puis catholique</faith>
  <education>Sedan</education>
  <occupation>académicien, traducteur</occupation>
  <affiliation when="1637">Académie française</affiliation>
  <socecStatus/>
  <note>Protestant de temps à autre. Traducteur contesté - "les Belles
    infidèles"</note>
  <event type="Acad_Fr" when="1637">
    <label>entre à l'Académie Française</label>
  </event>
  <ptr type="ISNI" target="http://www.isni.org/isni/0000000107866286"/>
  <ptr type="URI" target="https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolas_Perrot_d'Ablancourt"
  />
</person>
<person xml:id="Abl_ISN0000000107866286">
```

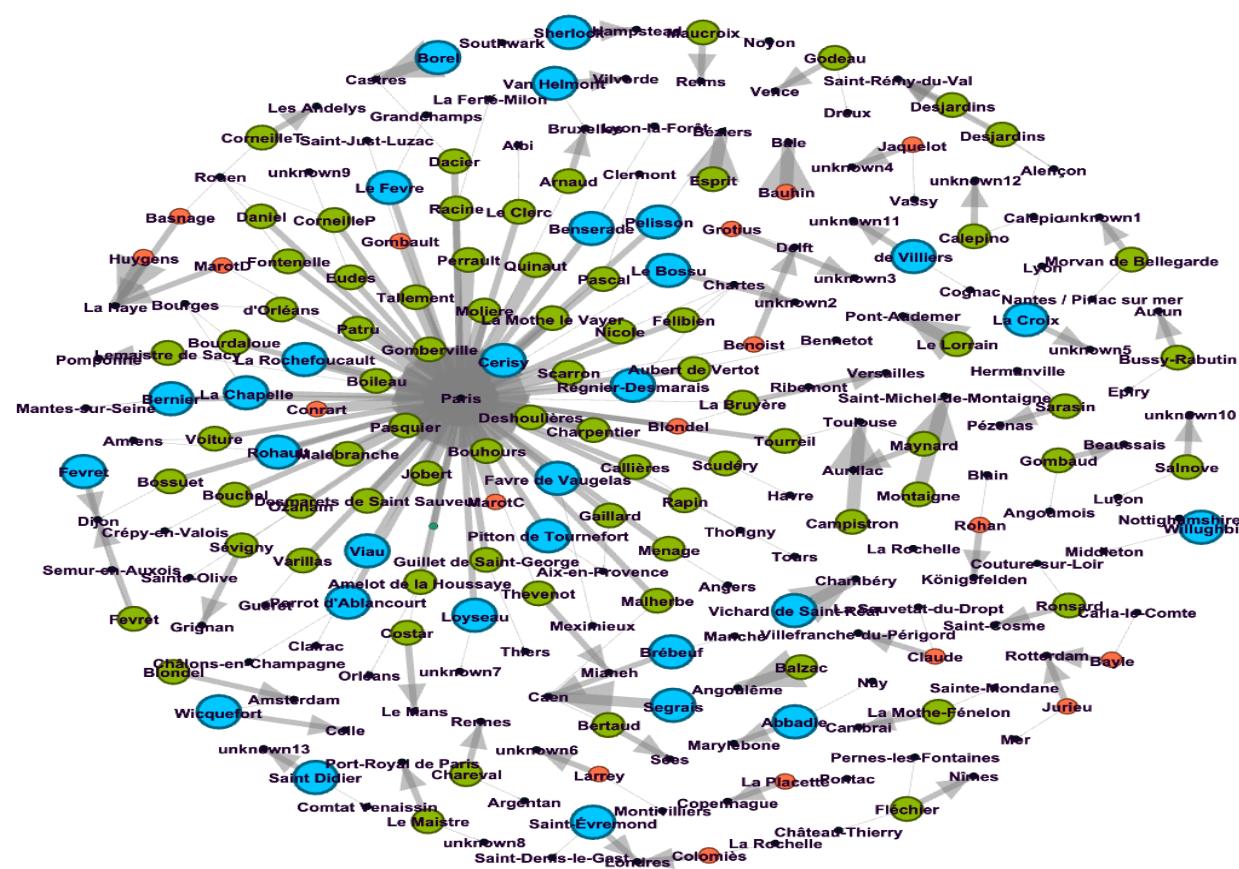
# Exploring data: BaseX

The screenshot shows the BaseX 8.2.1 beta software interface. At the top, the title bar reads "/Users/williams/Basnage/SimpleSearch.xq\* [Alphabetical] - BaseX 8.2.1 beta f2aaaf33". The main window is divided into several panes:

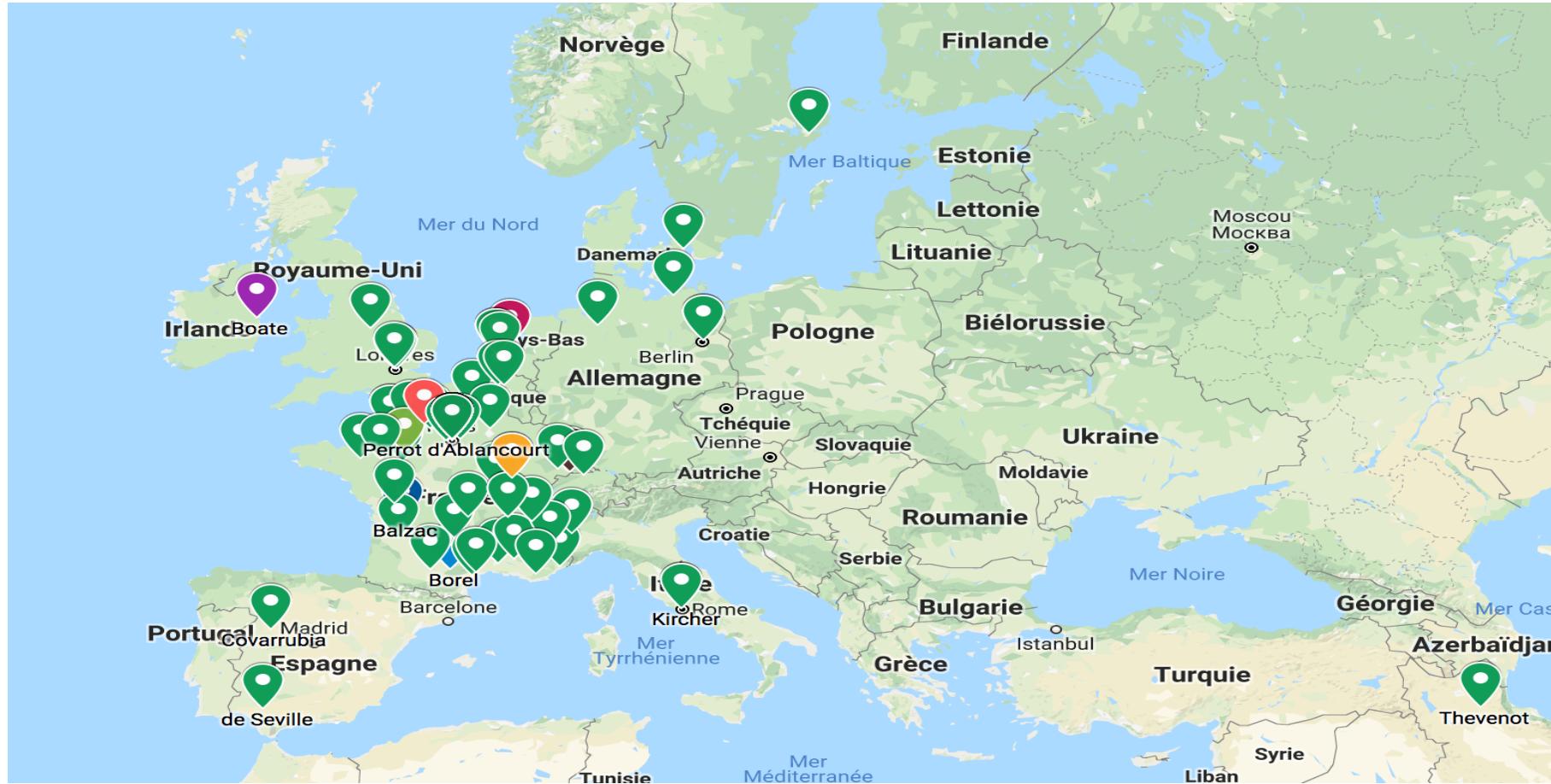
- XQuery Editor:** Displays the XQuery code:

```
1 for $entry in //*:entry
2 where matches ($entry,"indes orientales","i")
3 return normalize-space($entry)
```
- Results View:** Shows a large block of French text from a document, likely the result of the query execution.
- Navigation and File Explorer:** On the left, there's a file browser showing the directory structure under "/Users/williams". Other tabs in the header include "Bresil.xq", "droit.xq", "nationality&faith.xq", and "count\_author.xq".
- Bottom Navigation:** Includes icons for search, refresh, and other navigation functions, along with a status message "Total Time: 1208.47 ms".

# Visualising networks: Gephi



# The intellectual diaspora



# XVII century France

- Internal conflict and centralisation
- Wars of religion 1562 to 1598
- Henri IV (1553 – 1610, King from 1589) and the Edict of Nantes 1598
- Protestant France – safe places, academies – Saumur
- Louis XIV : the Sun King (1638 - 1715, King from 1643)
- Intolerance and revocation: 1695

# Early French lexicography

- Lexicography
  - Standardising language and conflict of authority – Ordonnance de Villers Cotteret 1539
  - Dictionaries of French
    - Estienne 1539 printer humanist - *Dictionnaire françois-latin, contenant les motz & manieres de parler françois, tournez en latin.* Published in Geneva.
    - Nicot 1604: The first real French dictionary
  - Cardinal Richelieu and the *Académie française*
  - The Académie monopoly : No rival dictionary during the creation of the dictionary and 20 years after
  - Richelet (1626-1698) : the first genuine monolingual French dictionary - published in Geneva

# The *Dictionnaire Universel*

- *Dictionnaire universel*
  - An encyclopaedic dictionary of French
  - Published in Rotterdam in 1690
  - Revised 1701, 1708, 1725/1728
- Furetière (1619-1688)
  - Abbé bourgeois , novelist and lexicographer
  - Member of the *Académie française*
  - Granted permission for a dictionary of terms, kicked out of the Académie after an enormous scandal
  - Dictionary published posthumously in Rotterdam in 1690, prefaced by Bayle

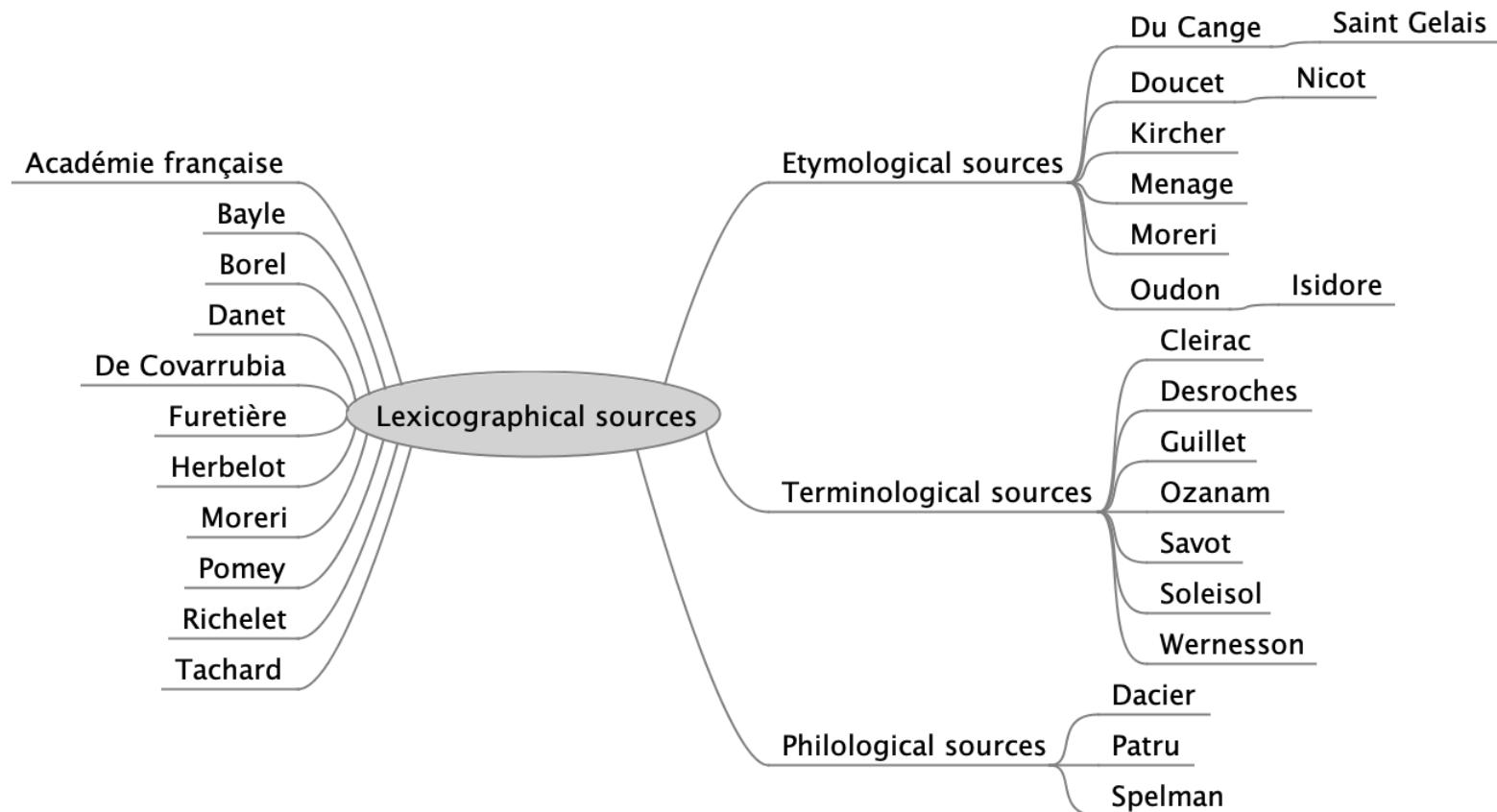
# Basnage : From reluctance to enthusiasm

- A Protestant lawyer, son of a leading member of the Parliament of Normandy
- Forced into exile after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes that outlawed protestants
- Succeeds the protestant philosopher Pierre Bayle as editor of a literary and philosophical journal - *Histoire des ouvrages des savants*
- Engaged by Leers, publisher of the DU, to compile a revised and enlarged version, published 1701
- Used experts to write scientific entries

# The art of compiling: Basnage's Lexicographical Sources

- Furetière
  - Accumulated knowledge of the Académie française
- Dictionaries
  - Richellet 1680, 1693
- Lexicons and specialised dictionaries
  - Desroches – naval terminology
  - Félibien – art
  - La Quintinie – gardening
- Primary sources
  - Numerous

# Lexicographical networks



# A dictionary of terms, and much more

- En terme | termes de Marine
- Furetière
  - 410 terms
- Basnage
  - 866 terms and rising, because often poorly signposted, or not at all
    - Marine
    - Artillery
    - Carpentry
    - Fortification
    - Mechanics – cabestan (winch)
    - War
    - ...

# Dr. Régis: Natural sciences

- « Je ne mets pourtant pas sur mon compte les articles d'Algèbre. Cette science m'est inconnue. Je ne m'approprie point non plus ce qui regarde la Medecine, l'Anatomie, la Pharmacie, la Chirurgie, & la Botanique. Je n'ai point voulu me fier à moi-même là-dessus. Un habile homme [Mr. Regis, Medecin à Amst (Amsterdam)] s'en est chargé. On a presque tout effacé ce que Mr. l'Abbé Furetiere avoit dit sur ces Arts, qui n'étoient point de sa compétence. »

# Adding data

- JARDINAGE. subst. masc. L'art de cultiver les jardins. [...] Le jardinage a été mis depuis peu de temps en un haut point de perfection par le Sr. le Nostre. La Quintinie est encore allé plus loin, & nous a donné une ample instruction sur le jardinage. Mr. Fatio a donné, depuis quelques mois (1699) au public un livre sur le jardinage où il enseigne les moyens d'employer utilement les reflexions du soleil. [...]
- Fatio was a member of the Royal Society, Basnage too
- La Quintinie is also cited by Régis for the natural sciences

# Naval terms: improving Furetière

- ABORDAGE . s. m. Terme de marine , qui se dit lors que deux vaisseaux se heurtent, ou s'accrochent pour se combattre. Aller à l'abordage, se dit de l'action d'un vaisseau qui en a joint un autre pour l'enlever. Faire l'abordage en belle, ou debout au corps,c'est-à-dire, l'éperon dans le flanc. L'abordage de franc étable est celui qui se fait par le devant, & en droiture, pour s'enferrer par les éperons. L'abordage de bout au corps, c'est mettre l'éperon dans le flanc.
- Abordage , se dit aussi du choc de deux vaisseaux du même party, soit lors qu'ils vont en flotte, soit lors qu'ils sont en même mouillage ; ce qui arrive par la violence des flots ou des vents qui les portent, & qui les font deriver les uns sur les autres.

# Who wrote what?

- Basnage
  - Comments and additions
  - Borrowing
- Régis' botanical sources
  - The Montpellier network: Bauhin, Tournefort ...
  - The English network: Rey, Willughbi ...
  - The Dutch network: Piso, Marcgravius ...
  - Total rewrite of entries

# Brazilian trees: de Laet, Thévet, Léry ...

- Laet 1640
  - L'Aiabutipita est un arbrisseau haut de cinq ou six palmes, il porte un fruct semblable aux amendes, mais il est noir, duquel se tire une huile de mesme couleur, dont les Sauvages oignent d'ordinaire les membres de ceux qui sont debiles. » (Laet 1640)
- Régis 1701
  - Aiabutipita. Arbrisseau du Bresil. Il porte un fruit noir, & pareil aux amendes, don les Sauvages tirent une huile pour fortifier les membres affoiblis.
  - Ajubatipita. Arbrisseau du Bresil, de la hauteur de cinq ou six palmes. Il porte un fruit noir semblable aux amandes, dont on tire une huile de même couleur. Les Sauvages se servent de cette huile, pour frotter les membres de ceux, à qui quelque mal a ôté les forces<pc>.</pc>

# Exploring language: Learner's dictionary?

- A French man in the Low Countries
- Descriptive, rarely prescriptive
- Etymologies (word stories)
- Examples
  - Direct quotes and made-up examples to illustrate usage
- Verb usage ad declension
  - Grammatically and through example
  - Abatre une maison pour la rebâtir. Ce Luiteur a abatu son homme sous lui. Ce Chasseur abat bien du gibier. On abat les noix avec la gaule.
- Collocations
  - Aller à l'abordage, se dit de l'action d'un vaisseau qui en a joint un autre pour l'enlever.

# Posterity

- French embargo
- The Trévoux Plagiarism
- The ‘Furetière’ forgetting Basnage – Quémada cites him only 5 times
- Networks to discover
  - Bluteau
  - Harris
  - Chambers
  - Encyclopaedia of d'Alembert and Diderot
  - Johnson
  - ....

# Reluctance, Enthusiasm, Forgotten, Refound

- Furetière
- Richelet
- Morais
- ...
- How many never signed their dictionary?
- How many were major revisers who are simply overlooked
- Historical lexicography opens windows and brings technical advances
- Historical lexicography reminds us of our debt to the makers

# Thank you

- Thank you EURALEX for my career
- Thank you members for having given me the opportunity to serve as President
- Thank you all the members I have met for your friendship and inspiration
- Thank YOU for listening