



Towards a Network Analysis of Hans Sloane's Collection: A Preliminary Study

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Presentation Outline



1. The Sloane Lab Project
2. Knowledge Base & Data Sources
3. Historical Catalogues
4. The Dataset
5. The Sloane Social Network

The Sloane Lab Project



- **The Sloane Lab** is a **TANC Discovery Project** (2021–2024)
- We aim to **integrate** a highly fragmented **collection** through **digital means...**
- ...**opening it up** for anybody to **research and study**



Sloane & His Collection

- **Hans Sloane** (1660–1753), physician, naturalist and collector
- Collected **70,000+ objects** of many different kinds
- One of the **founding collections** of the **British Museum, Natural History Museum** and **British Library**



Sloane Collection



Enlightenment Gallery
(British Museum)



Sloane Herbarium
(Natural History Museum)

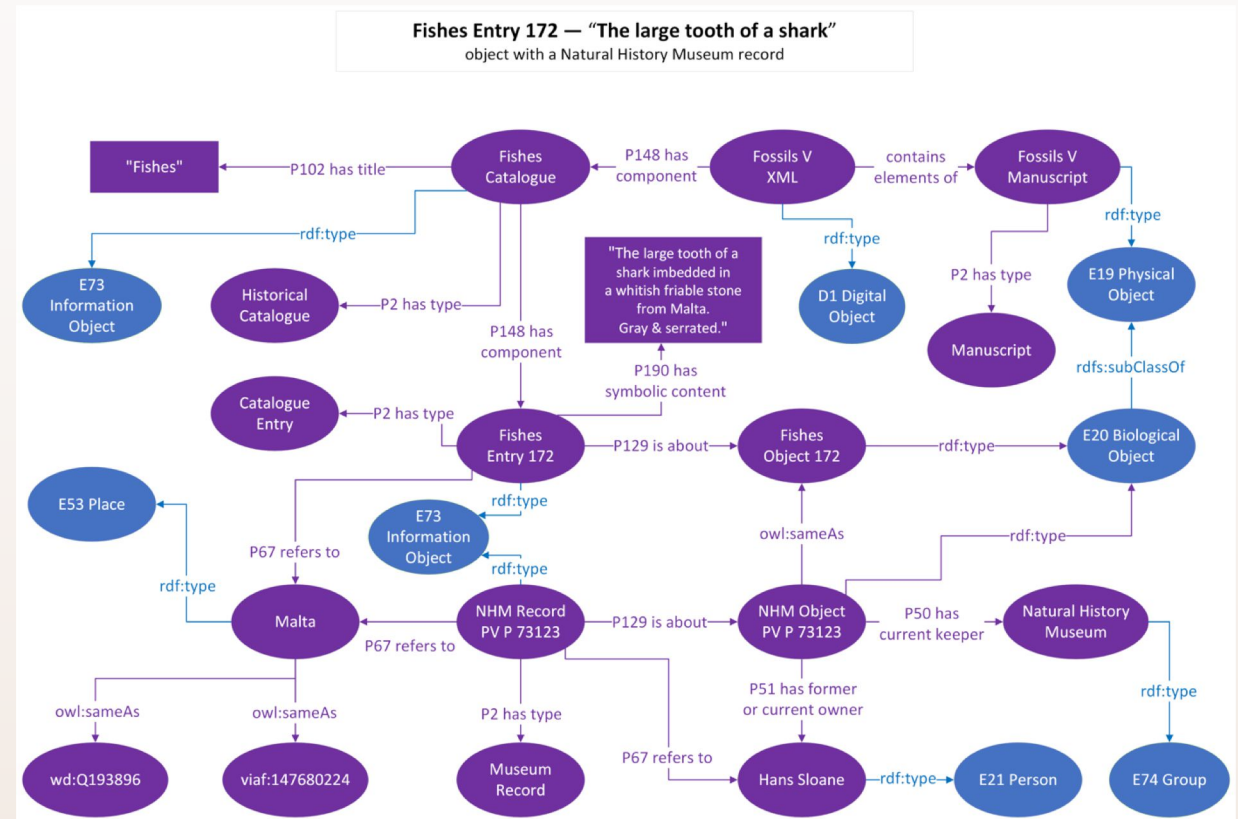
A Participatory Project



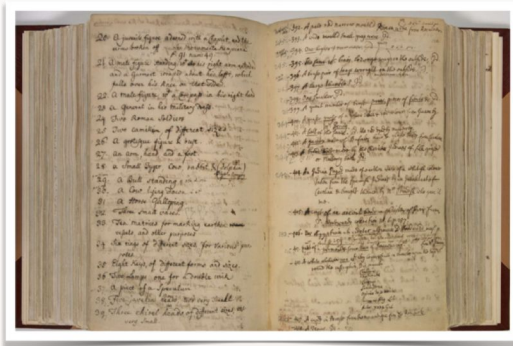
- Involve not just **institutions**, but also **communities**
- Look at the collection from **different perspectives**
- Attempt to remedy “**data absences**” and **biases**

Ortolja-Baird, A., & Nyhan, J. (2021). “Encoding the haunting of an object catalogue: on the potential of digital technologies to perpetuate or subvert the silence and bias of the early-modern archive”. *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*.

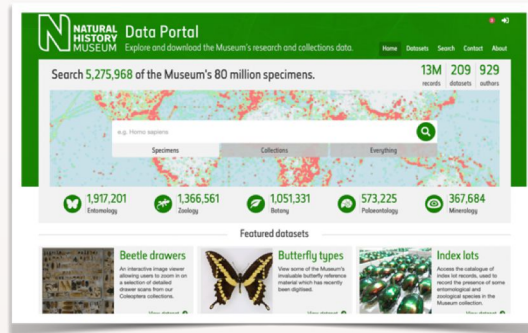
- We are building a **knowledge base** that will aggregate and open up knowledge about the collection
- **Data model** based on **Semantic Web** standards and on the **CIDOC CRM** ontology



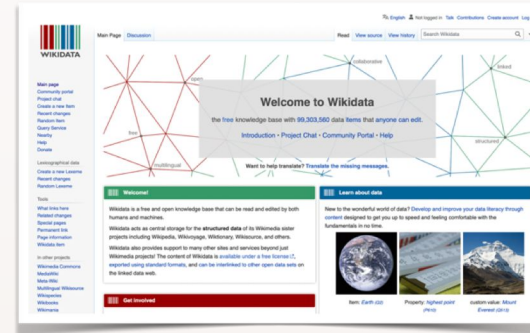
Data Sources



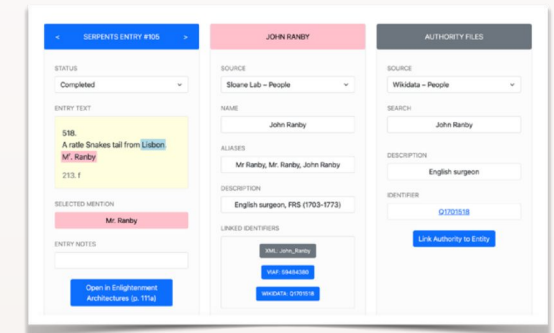
Historical Catalogues



Contemporary Catalogues & Other Datasets



Existing Knowledge Bases & Authority Files



Annotation Tools

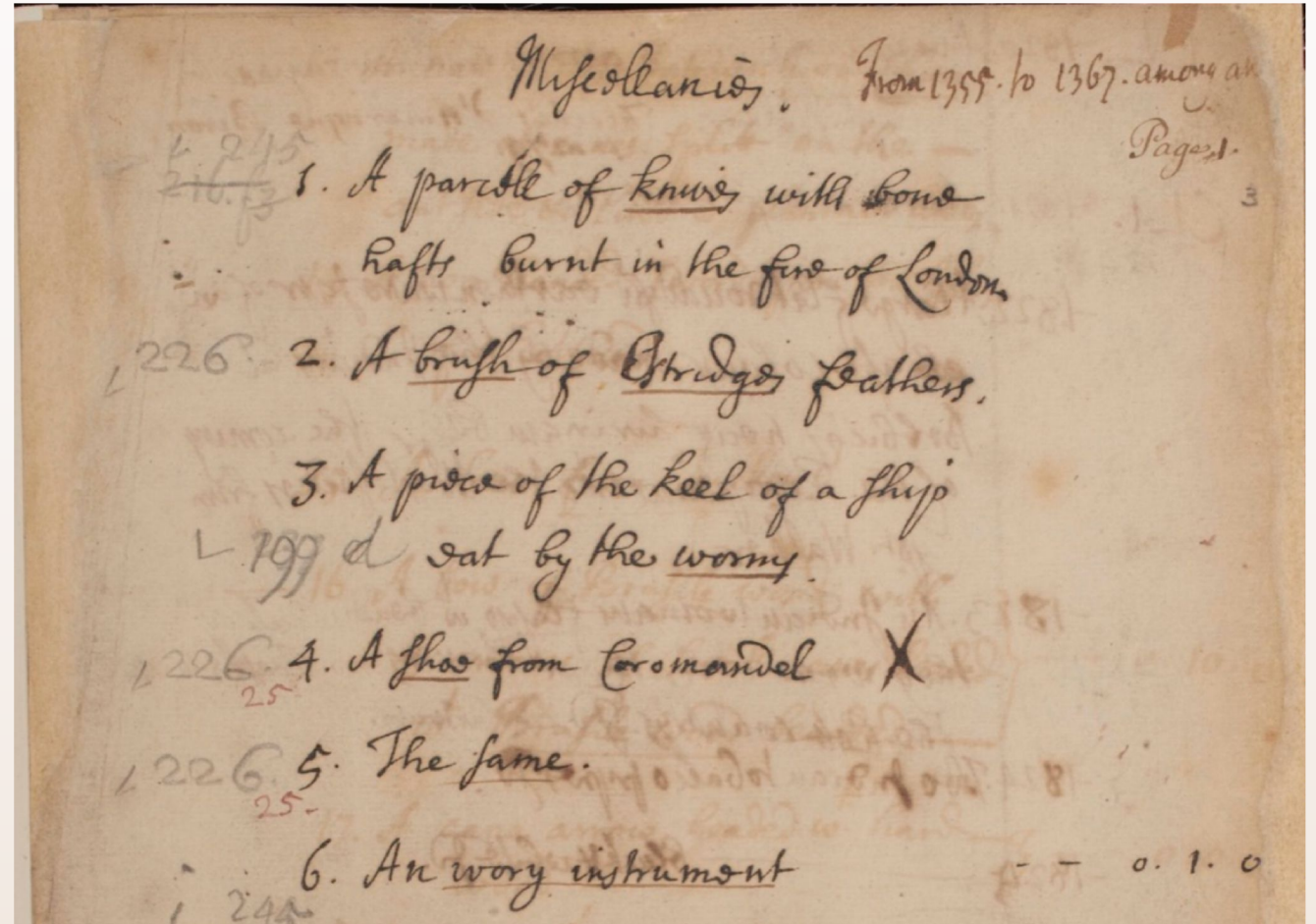
- **Data** will be imported from **several different sources**
- At this stage, most of the data comes from **historical catalogues**

Historical Catalogues

- **5 manuscripts** containing **Sloane's catalogues** were encoded as **TEI-XML** in a previous project
- The **data** from these **catalogues** is readily available to us

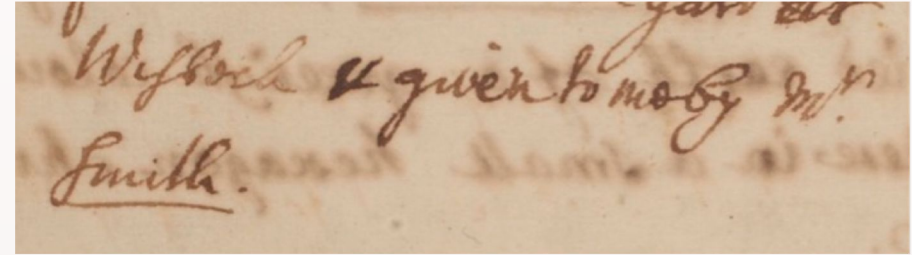
Enlightenment Architectures project:

<https://reconstructingsloane.org/enlightenmentarchitectures/>

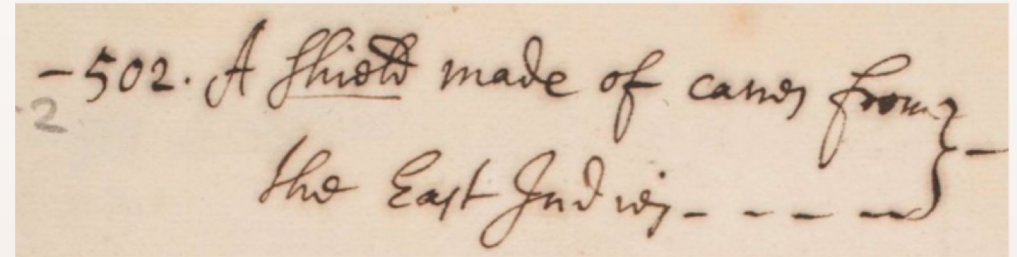


Many Uncertainties

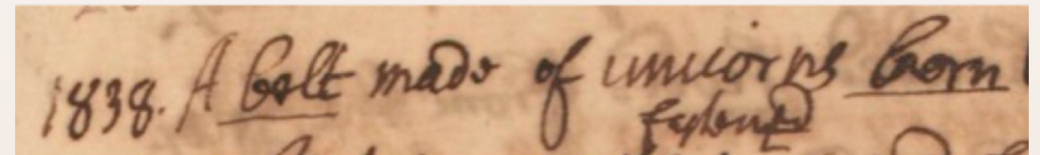
- “given to me by Mr. Smith” ...
but who is he?
- “A shield made of canes from
the East Indies” ... but where?
- “A belt made of unicorns horn”
- “The same.”



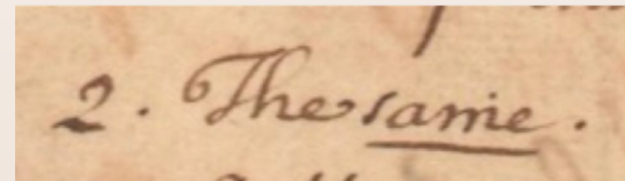
Wiflock & given to me by Mr.
Smith.



-502. A shield made of canes from
the East Indies - - - -



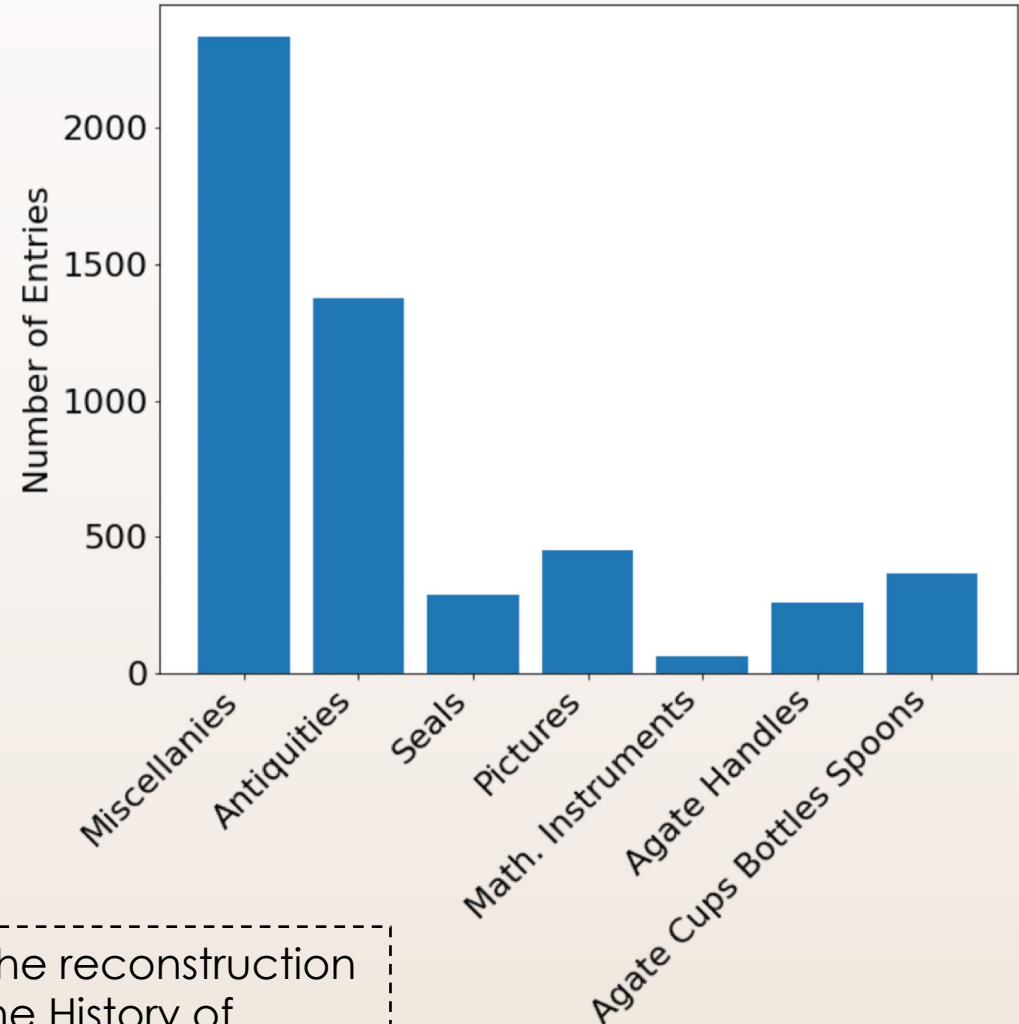
1838. A belt made of unicorns horn



2. The same.

Miscellanea manuscript

- 7 catalogues (+2 indexes)
- 5573 entries in total
- 939 (17%) mention a person
- 874 (16%) mention a place



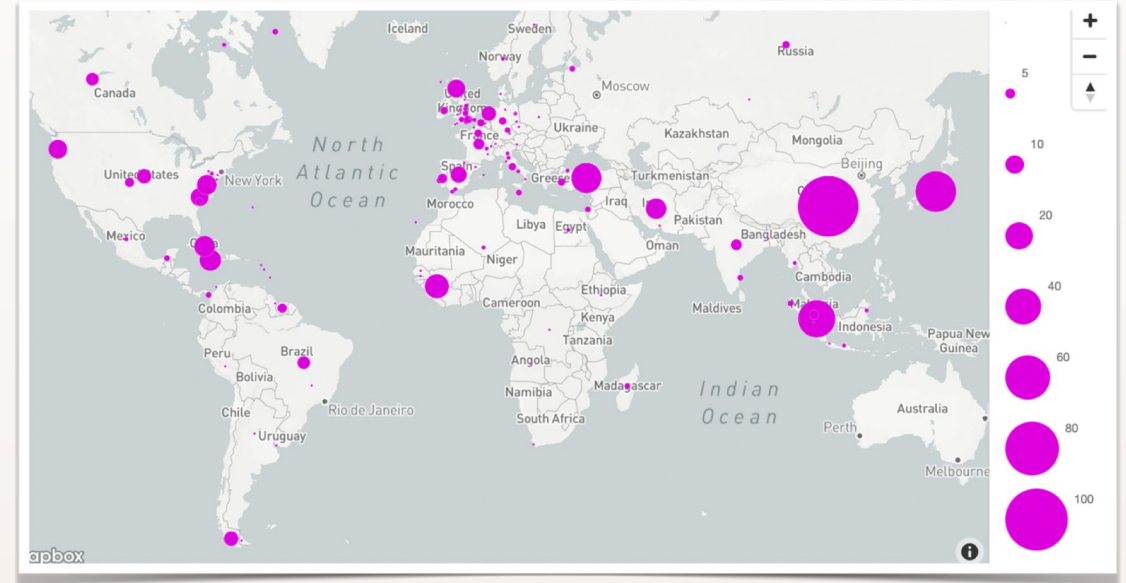
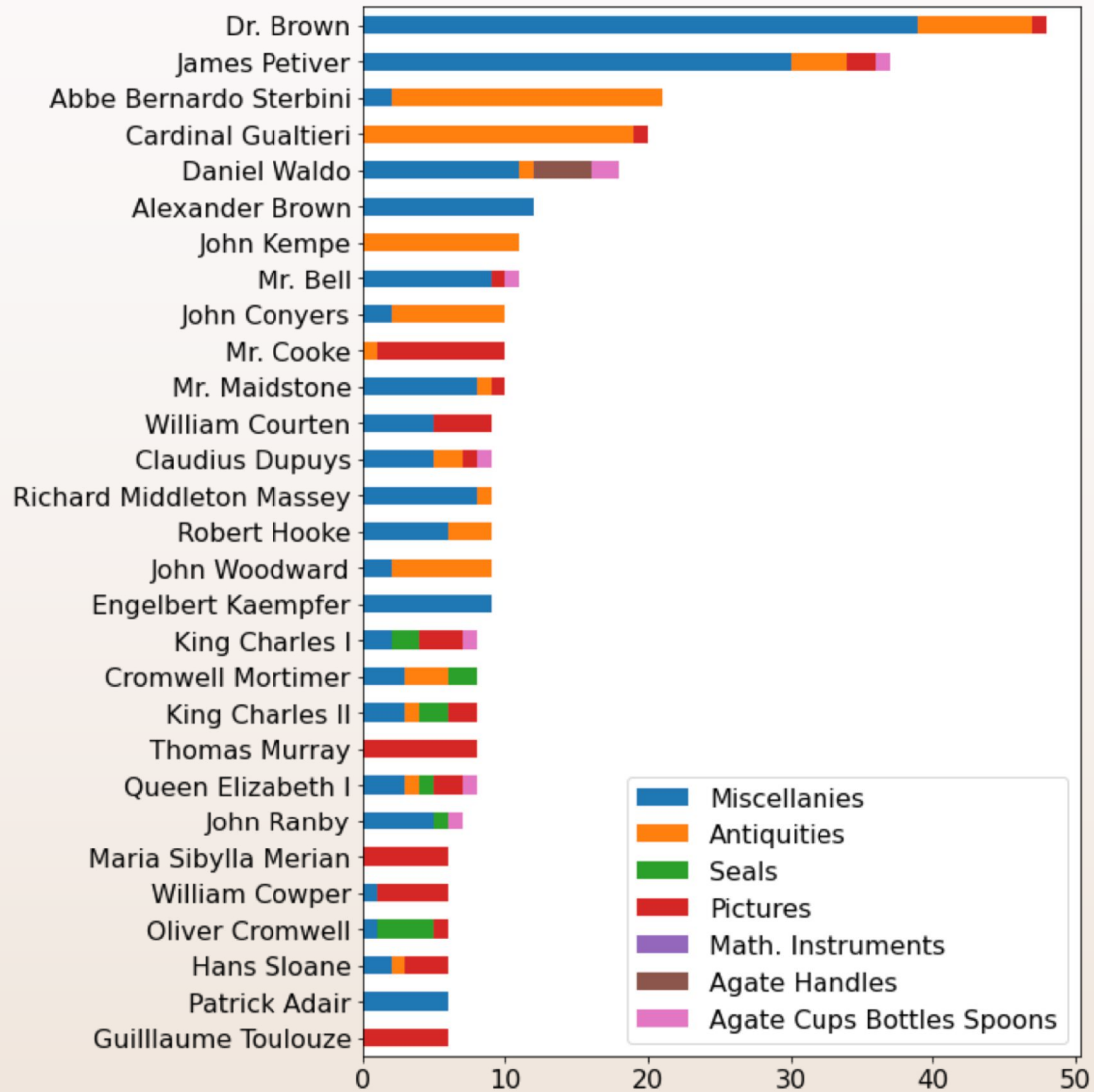
Sloan, K. & Nyhan, J. (2021) "Enlightenment architectures: the reconstruction of Sir Hans Sloane's cabinets of 'Miscellanies'", *Journal of the History of Collections* 33(2), pp. 199–218.

Mentions of People



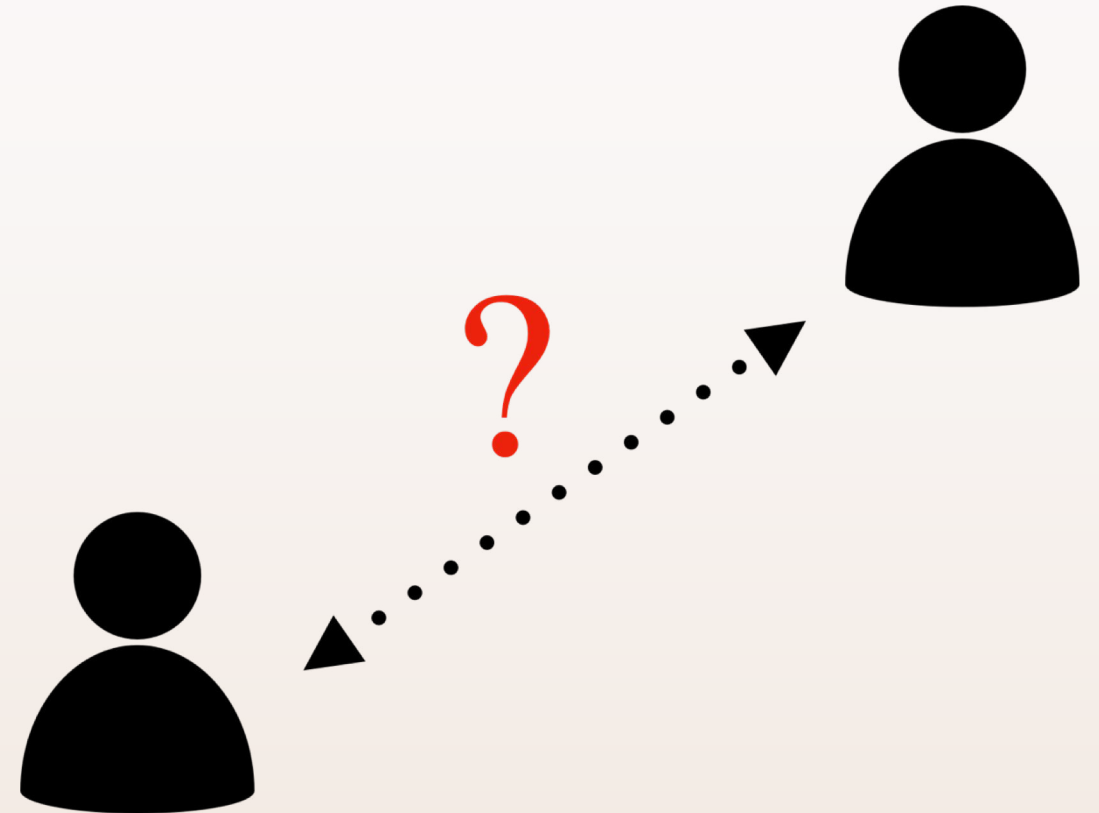
| Catalogue | Entries | Mentioning People | Percentage | Total Mentions |
|------------------------------|---------|-------------------|------------|----------------|
| Miscellanies | 2335 | 484 | 20.73% | 548 |
| Antiquities | 1376 | 167 | 12.14% | 195 |
| Seals | 622 | 56 | 9.00% | 69 |
| Pictures | 450 | 191 | 42.44% | 250 |
| Math. Instruments | 165 | 11 | 6.67% | 16 |
| Agate Handles | 261 | 10 | 3.83% | 10 |
| Agate Cups Bottles Spoons | 364 | 20 | 5.49% | 20 |
| Total | 5573 | 939 | 16.85% | 1108 |

People & Places



Issues with the Dataset

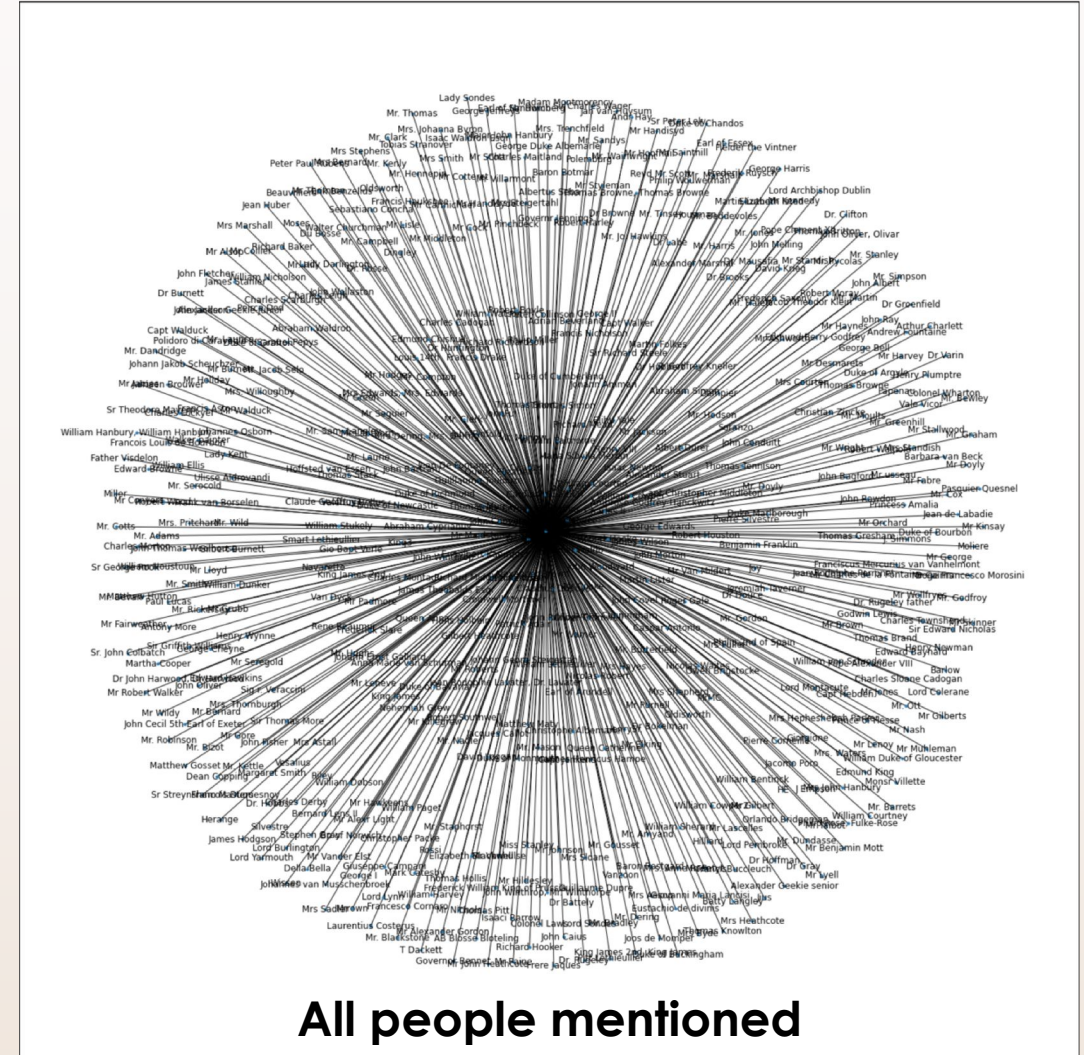
- Many **names of people**, but **few links** between them
- Only **2% of all entries** mention **2 or more people** at the same time
- Only **6% of all entries** mention both a **person** and a **place**
- **Absences & biases**: who is not mentioned?



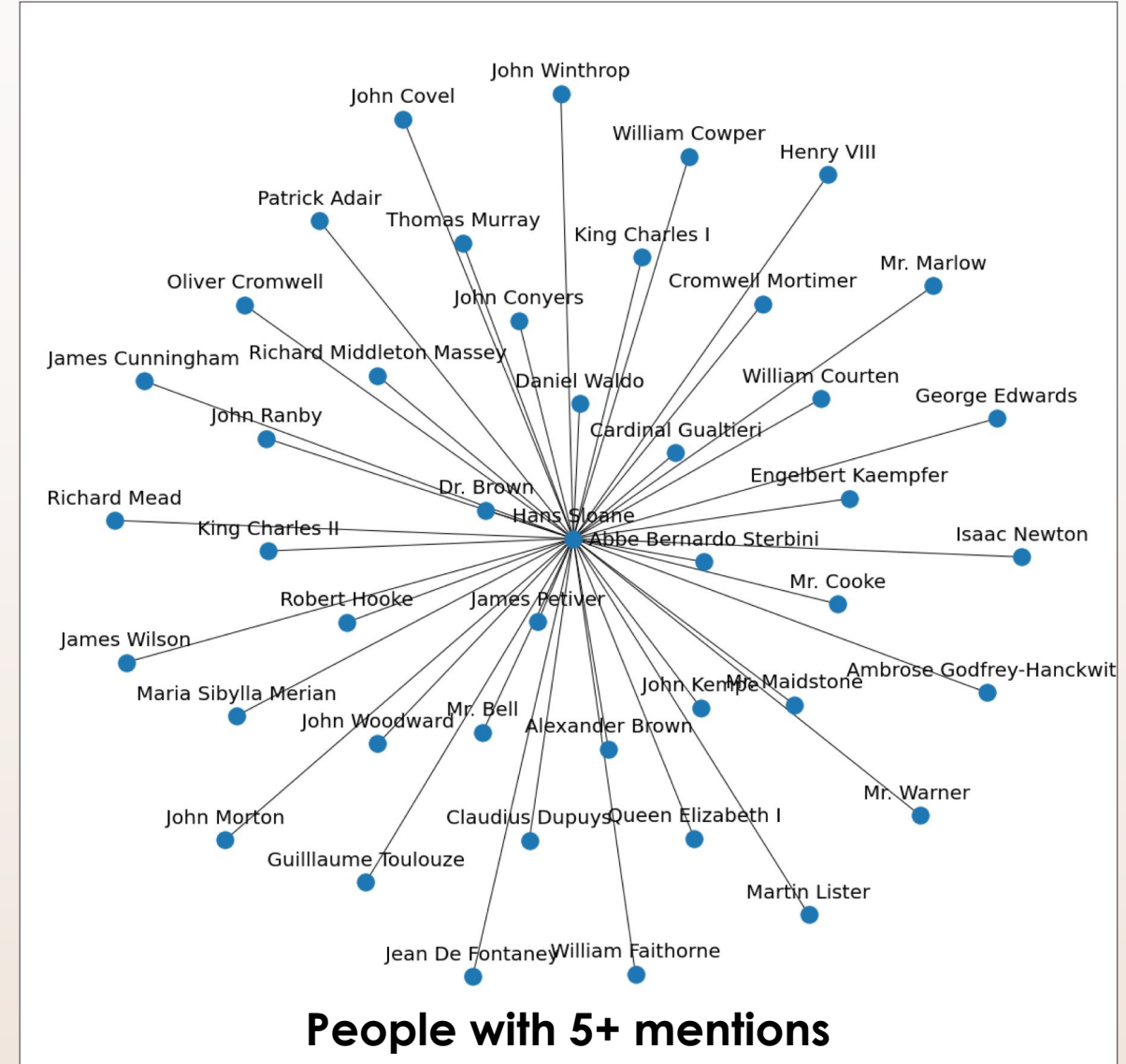
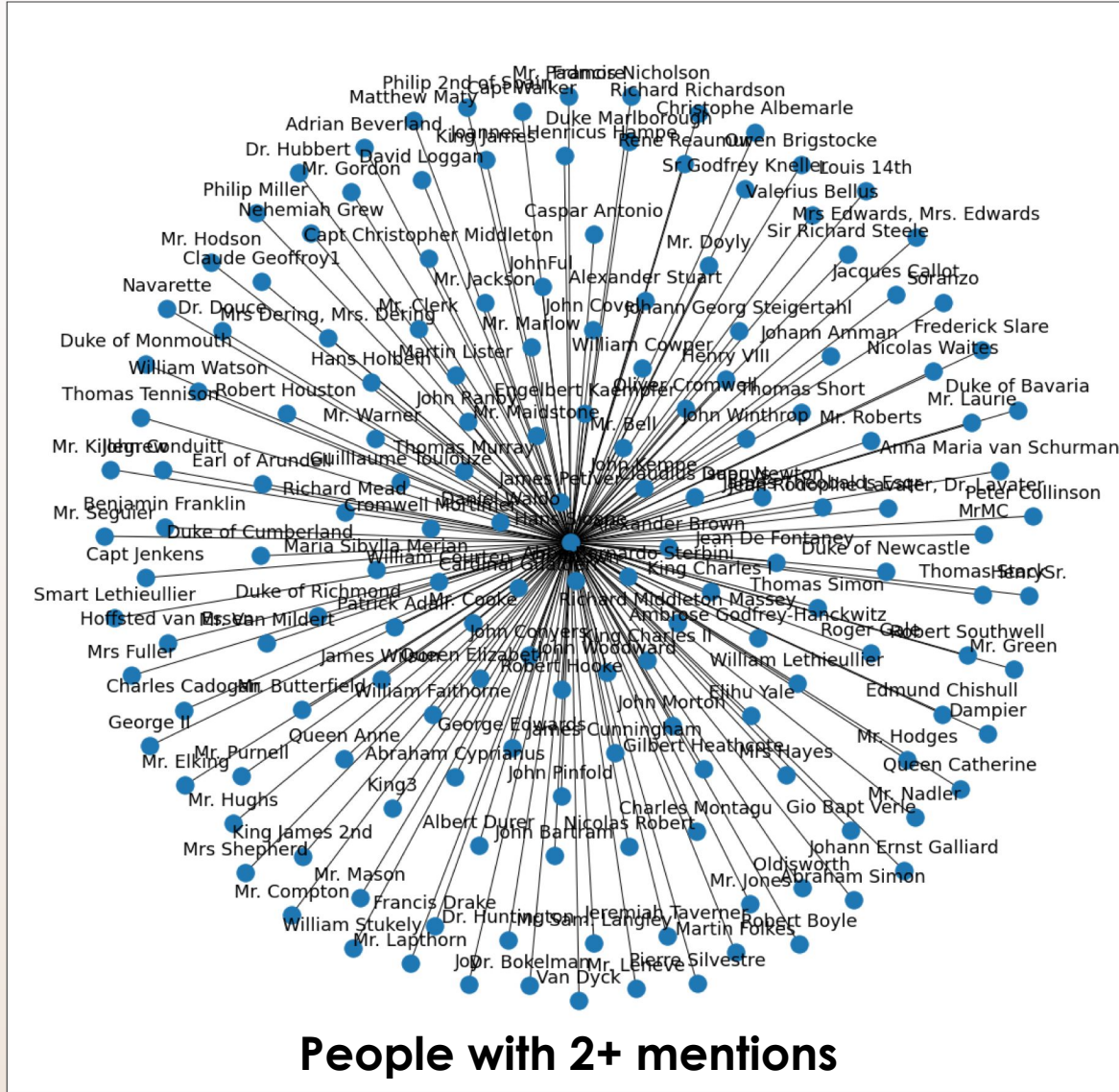
Sloane's Ego Network

- We can build an **ego network centred on Sloane**
- Using **number of mentions** as a measure of distance
- People who are mentioned more frequently form a sort of **“inner circle”**

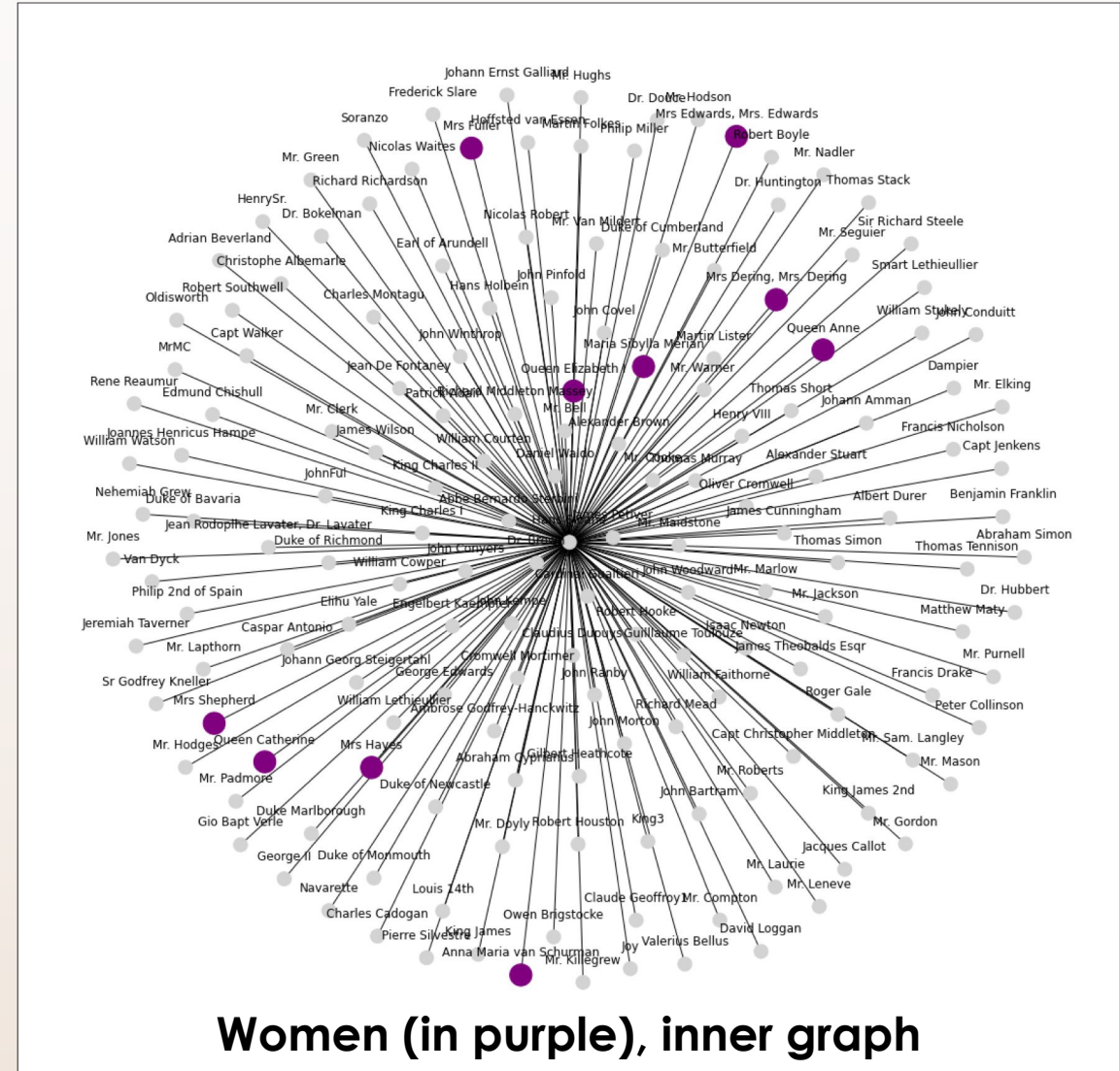
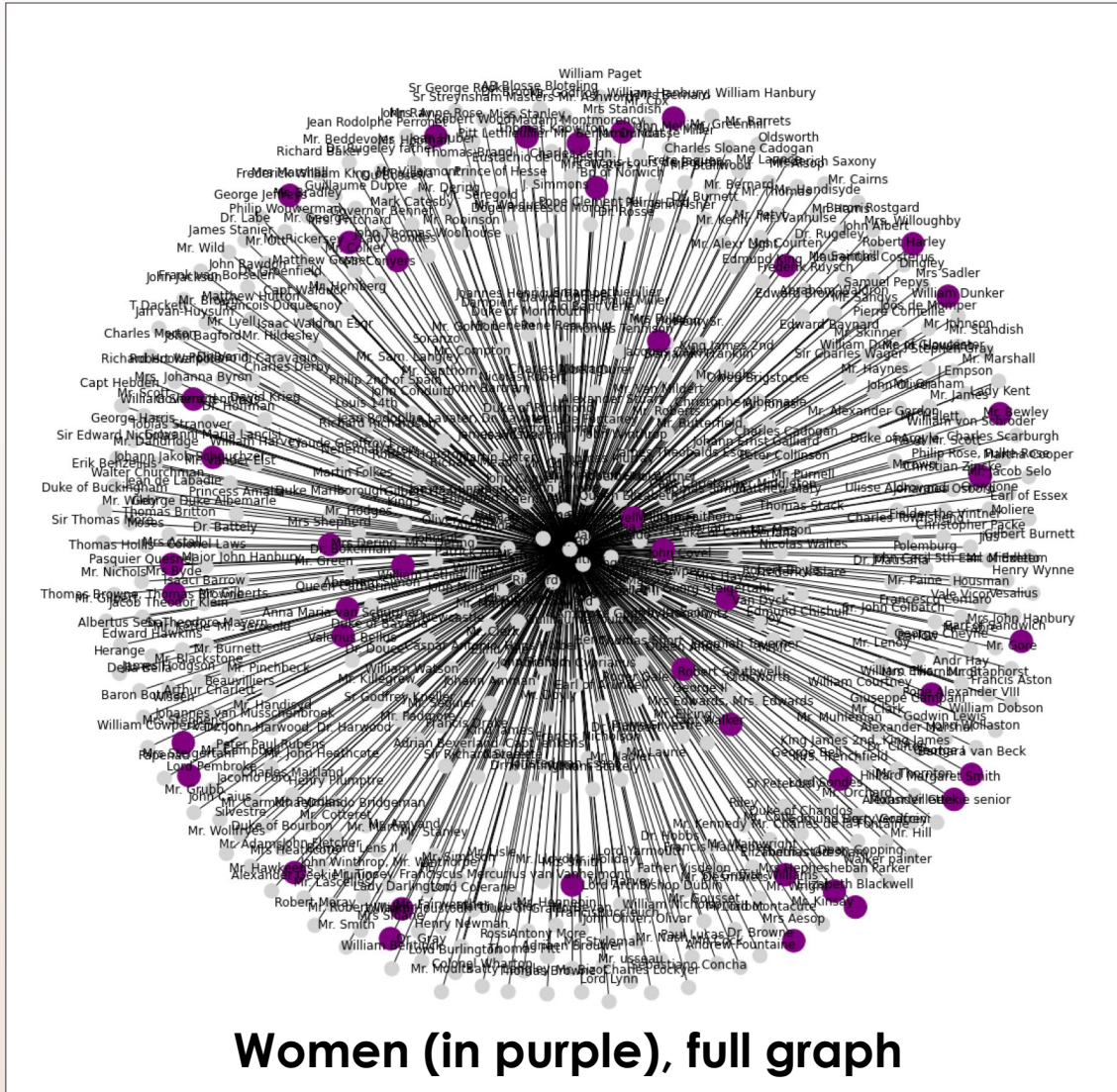
Work done with the contribution of TU Darmstadt students, Historical Network Analysis course



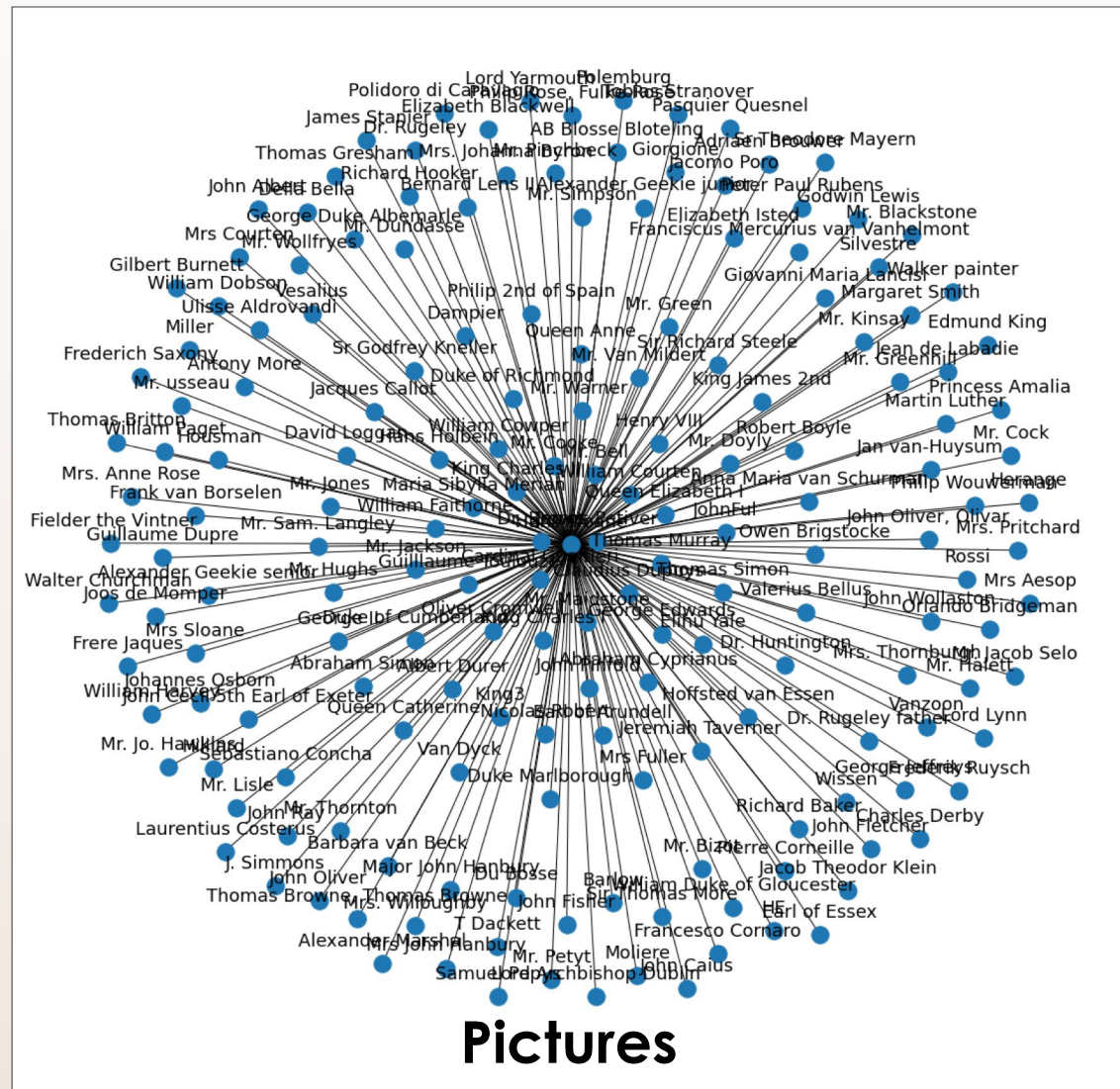
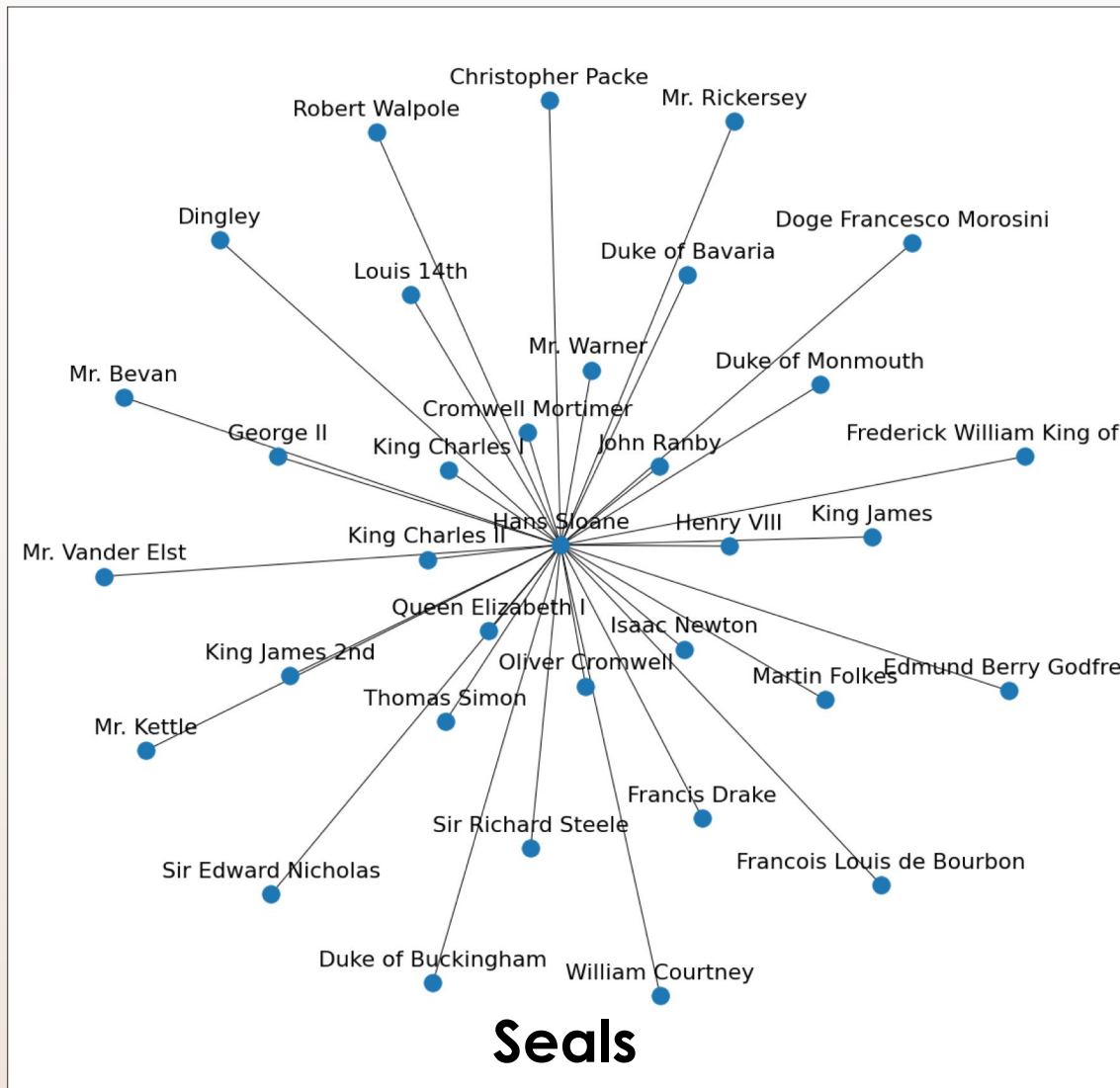
Closeups of the Network



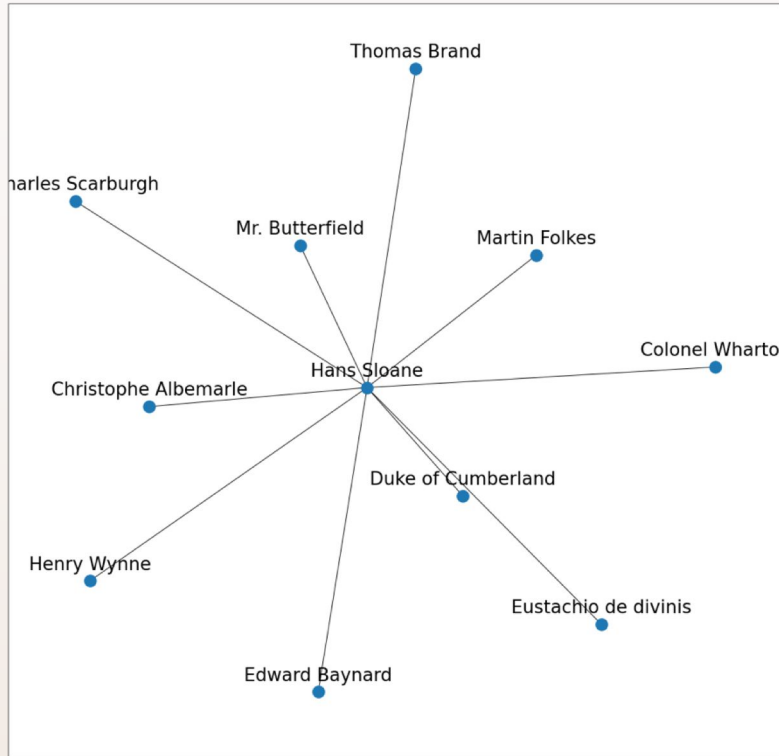
The Role of Women



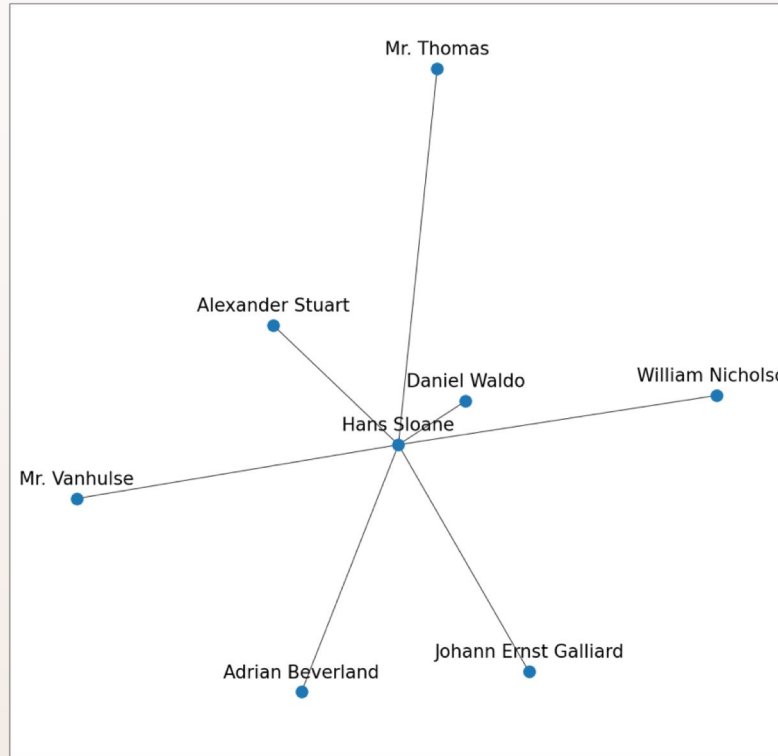
Different Catalogues (3-4)



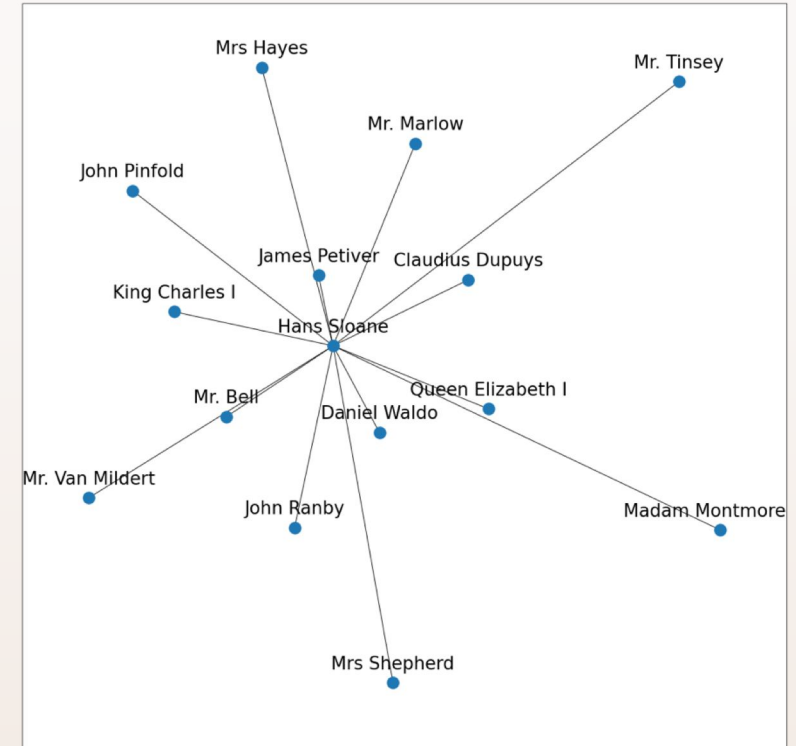
Different Catalogues (5-6-7)



Math. Instruments



Agate Handles

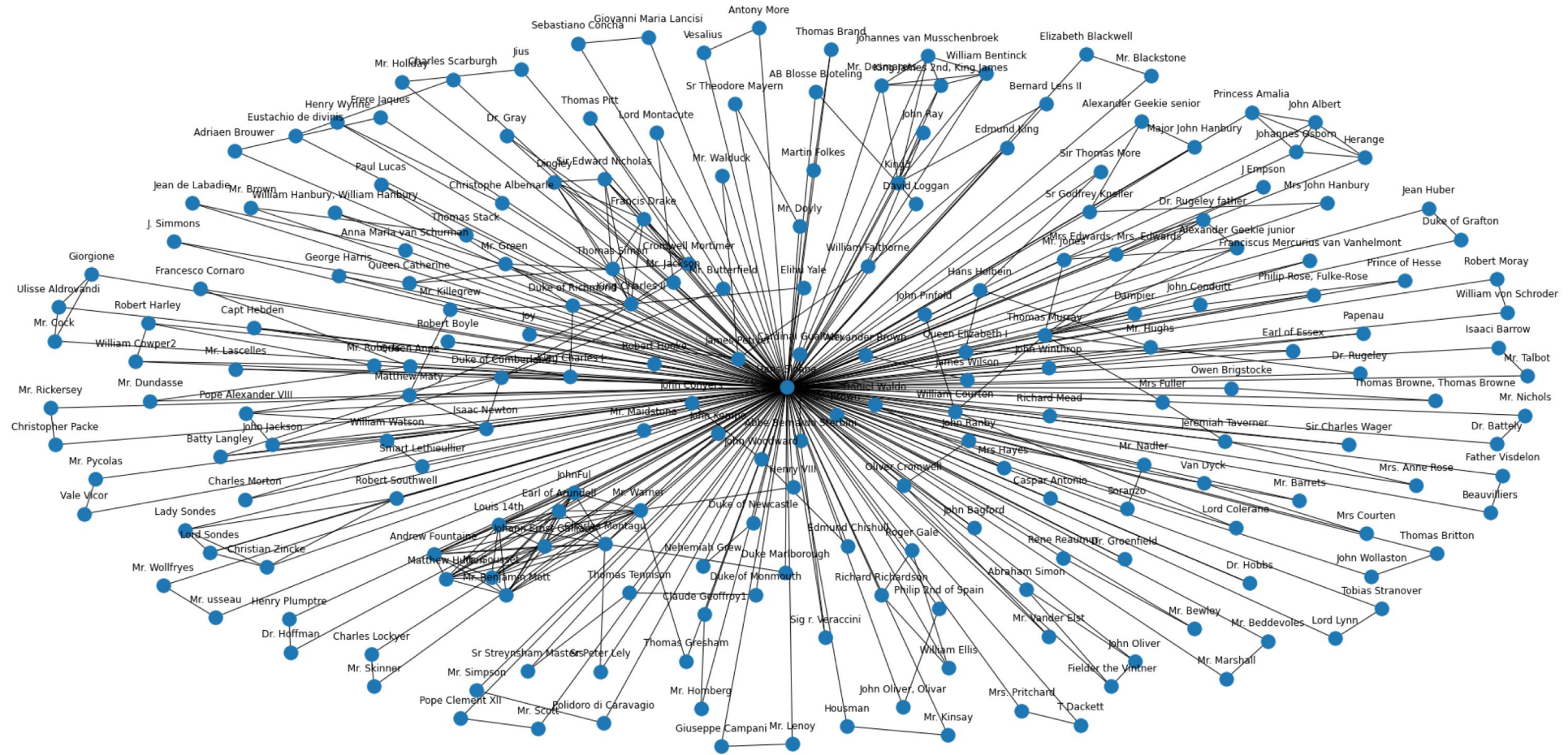


Agate Cups Bottles Spoons

We can **augment the dataset** by annotating:

1. People **mentioned together** in the same entry
 2. People linked through a **specific place**
 3. People linked in a **different source** (e.g. Sloane Letters)
 4. People linked through **occupation or membership** (e.g. Royal Society members)
- ... but this is still a work in progress!

A Preview of #1



Ego network with links between people mentioned together

Conclusions



- We are working to collect data about **Hans Sloane's social network** and study it through **network analysis**
- We conducted an initial experiment on **7 catalogues**, visualising Sloane's **ego network** for each, and for the whole dataset
- We identified an "**inner circle**" of people who appear closer to Sloane, and showed the **contribution of women** to the collection
- The **individual graphs** for each catalogue show **different networks** that depend on the **type of catalogued objects**



Thank you / Q&A

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