

## Palaeography Lab Report

In the palaeography lab, the handwritings belong to the Elizabethan period was examined, particularly the handwriting of Newton. While reviewing the handwritings of that period, which seemed quite aesthetic to the eye, it was difficult to understand the context at first glance. The changes brought by each period showed their effect in the written language as well. When a small amount of translation could be made using the source about the Elizabethan handwritings in order to make sense of Newton's notes, another interesting situation was the abbreviations used for conjunctions. [1] Perhaps, thanks to these abbreviations, Newton was saving both time and paper. It is quite shocking that if it is not a sketch, that page was rewritten when a mistake is made due to the absence of a chemical that could remove the ink stain at that time. The handwritings belong to that and previous periods should be appreciated more since writing with feather and ink on the paper is laborious. Furthermore paper is prone to be harmed easily such as burning because of some fire accidents.

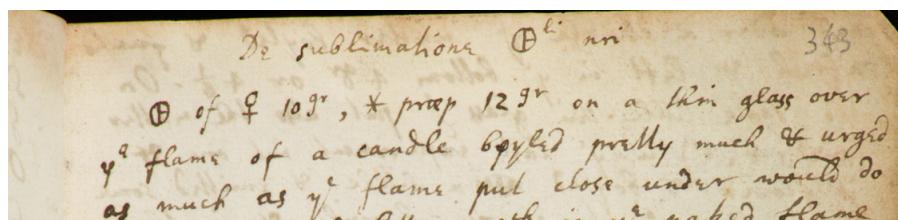


Figure 1. From the chemistry notes of Newton, here the abbreviation  $y^a$  stands for “the”.

A historian examines the finer details besides translating texts an reenacting experiments such as checking the way of the usage of paper, asking whether it was written neatly for the printing purposes or it was just a sketch. In general, sketches may have more faults which can be seen from ink blot or lines above the text. Thanks to these fine details, historians could make sense of the author's or inventor's note-taking routine. This is an important method that sheds light on that person's working style.

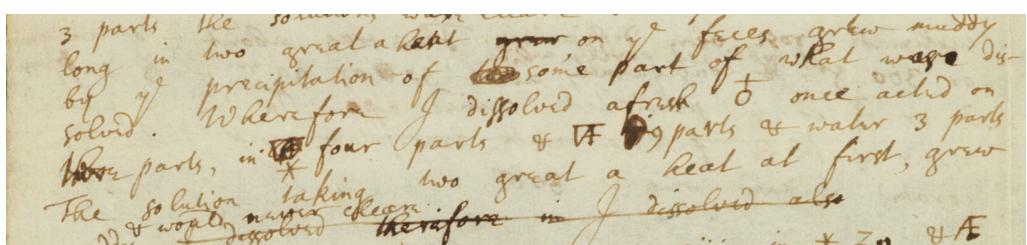


Figure 2. From the notes of Newton, here faults can be seen through ink blots and lines

In order to make of science, it is essential to analyze the data well and to associate the results with a logical reason. These data may be one's own observations or, in addition, observations of people who have done such research before. These previous work should have been transcribed in order to use them as objective data. Since any oral transmission has no scientific value, they should have been in a written form. Moreover, it is valuable for a

scientist to take notes on her/his work, both in terms of creating her/his own archive and sharing these works with others and directing other inventions and ideas. Thanks to written texts, the researcher can follow both the past and current issues. With this way the researcher can route her/his studies. A scientist takes a lots of notes, since many things come to her/his mind and it is crucial to record them in order not to forget them. It is not surprising that a scientist like Newton, who works extensively on many different subjects, has so many sketches and printed notes. Working in a wide range from optics to alchemy, it is not possible for Newton not to examine the notes of researchers both in his time and centruies ago while doing his research. Unless a written source is read by others, it loses its feature of being a scientific source. Thus, it must be read by others in order to maintain the sustainability of that resource. However, as mentioned before, the changes that have continued over the centuries have affected the language most, especially the written language. Therefore, palaeography is of invaluable importance in order to be able to read and make sense of ancient sources and to be used as a source in today's research. To conclude, both reading and writing are the cornerstones of doing science.

#### References:

- [1] Elizabethan Handwriting for Beginners, by Muriel St. Clare Byrne