

## Printing Technology and Royal Control in Fifteenth-Century Spain: A Case Study

It is widely believed that the new resources provided by the invention of moveable types in the middle of the fifteenth century increased royal propaganda techniques. As a consequence, it has also been assumed that the Spanish Crown started to use printing at the end of the fifteenth century as an important tool in enforcing its control, which led to the spread of printed material throughout all territories, stimulating national identity and royal legitimacy.

This paper analyzes the compilation of Castilian laws titled *Las Ordenanzas Reales*, commissioned by the Spanish Crown to Alfonso Diaz de Montalvo and published for the first time in 1484. The publishing history of *Las Ordenanzas Reales* reveals both the possibilities and underestimated power of printing, allows insight into how printing was not immediately controlled, and brings into question the rigid and ideological printing management allegedly used by the Spanish Crown.

I contend that the Spanish Crown took new but naive steps towards the use of print. It applied its book experience and technological knowledge of books-as-manuscripts to a completely new technique of producing books with unknown consequences. The Crown could not interpret a phenomenon that was not part of its socio-cultural world. It could not intentionally control and manipulate a force that it did not yet know and understand.