

Rare book librarianship and historical bibliography

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Introduction

The rare books world saw considerable activity in the years 2011–2015, and, especially through Research Libraries UK (RLUK) initiatives, enjoyed a high profile. Particular emphasis was on digitization, rendering texts available outside library walls. Concurrently, libraries plunged themselves into ‘engagement’ (the buzzword supplanting ‘promotion’ and ‘outreach’ as a traditional core activity of rare book librarianship, and consciously including ‘public engagement’ beyond a library’s main stakeholders), whereby the celebration of printed objects through exhibitions, publications, and teaching emphasized the continued value of the printed artefact. Such activity, alongside acquisitions, concern at disposals, and projects to house special collections in new environments, conveyed a clear and triumphant message amidst challenges that rare books and special collections matter.

RLUK initiatives

A strand on ‘promoting unique and distinctive collections’ within RLUK strategy 2011–2014 gave special collections particular prominence. The purpose was to maximize ‘the potential of these collections in all formats held by RLUK members’, including ‘activity on public engagement, fundraising, promotion, resource discovery and delivery, and digitisation, and ... encompass[ing] value, impact and staff skills’.¹ The main resulting report was ‘Unique and distinctive collections: opportunities for research libraries’, which defined unique and distinctive collections (‘UDCs’), discussed using them, managing them and resources for them, and provided case studies and recommendations to strengthen their support of the objectives of research libraries and their parent organizations.² The report drew upon a ‘Survey of Special Collections and Archives in the United Kingdom and Ireland’ produced in collaboration with OCLC (2013) and also released within RLUK’s Unique and distinctive collections strategic strand; points made include increased use of special collections, and user expectations that everything would be digitized.³ Strategy for 2014–2017 included a strand: ‘Nothing hidden, nothing lost: exposing and exploiting our collections’, part of which was ‘Uncover hidden collections’.⁴ Whilst the emphasis here was cataloguing broadly, the relevance for special collections is evident from the high proportion of special collections material among hidden collections, as shown by a survey of hidden collections undertaken by RLUK and the London Library in

2010 and published in interim form as part of the Unique and distinctive collections project in 2012.⁵ Two aims expressed within the strand featured special collections explicitly, 'Develop the Unique and Distinctive Collections Hub into a web-based information exchange', and 'Articulate the economic and cultural impact of the archives, manuscripts and rare books held in RLUK libraries'.

Cataloguing

Cataloguing, the continued necessity of which was underlined by the RLUK 'Hidden collections' report mentioned, entered a new phase as several libraries introduced the new cataloguing code *Resource description and access (RDA)* to catalogue new books. Some libraries, such as those of Oxford University, implemented *RDA* features when cataloguing early printed books, pending a revised *RDA*-compatible edition of *Descriptive cataloging of rare materials (books)* (DCRM(B)). British rare book librarianship benefited from a non-British advance when DCRM(B) became freely available on the internet in 2014.⁶ The Historic Libraries Forum produced guides on cataloguing maps and music in its series of guidelines on cataloguing various types of rare materials.⁷

Major activity on a union catalogue was represented by the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC) at St Andrews.⁸ This had initially advertised itself as a collective database of all books published in Europe between the invention of printing and the end of the sixteenth century. Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funding awarded in 2011 for an additional four years enabled its expansion into the seventeenth century. USTC held annual conferences at St Andrews, publishing the proceedings with Brill, and in 2011 produced a printed short-title catalogue of pre-1601 books from the Low Countries, listing over 32,000 editions.⁹

External funding facilitated a few library-specific cataloguing projects. Most significantly, in 2011 Cambridge University ended its five-year Mellon-funded 'Tower Project' to catalogue nearly 200,000 19th-century British publications acquired by the Library under legal deposit legislation and held in the Library's tower.¹⁰ On a smaller scale, the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded the cataloguing of the collection at King's College London of the nineteenth-century physicist and inventor Sir Charles Wheatstone (some 3,000 items), as part of a cross-disciplinary research project between four institutions, 'Scrambled messages'; St John's College, Cambridge catalogued and promoted the collection of Victorian polymath Samuel Butler (2011–2013) with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund; and the Wellcome Institute funded a project at Glasgow University to catalogue some 250 early printed books relating to syphilis and to create a dedicated website.¹¹ Other libraries used their own resources to catalogue or continue to catalogue their rare materials. Seen numerically, landmarks were the completion of the cataloguing of bound pamphlets, mainly from the nineteenth century, at the Royal College of Surgeons of England (30,640 items), and all the pre-1820 books at the Queen's College, Oxford (38,386 titles). The nature of material added to

online catalogues ranged from a *Roman de la rose* collection at the National Library of Wales to almost 2,500 eighteenth- and nineteenth-century legal books at the Royal Courts of Justice; private press books and association copies at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; and the Linnaeus collection at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, part of a project begun in 2014 to catalogue all 4,000 published works in the RBGE's rare book collection. Some cataloguing was conducted in conjunction with digitization projects (see below), such as Welsh almanacs at the National Library of Wales, Spanish chapbooks at Cambridge University Library (AHRC-funded, as part of a project 'Wrongdoing in Spain 1800–1936: Realities, Representations, Reactions', 2011–2014), and medical books at the University of Bristol and at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

The Royal College of Physicians and Dr Williams's Library launched their online public access catalogues, including rare books, in 2012, with Eton College following in 2013, whilst RLUK widened the reach of rare books by mounting the holdings of numerous special, professional and subscription libraries, including rare books, on its union catalogue Copac: the London Library; the Leighton Library, Dunblane; the Royal College of Psychiatrists antiquarian book collection (all 2012); the National Museum of Wales Library; the University of Exeter Library; the Mathematical Association; the Zoological Society of London; the Humanist Library and Archives (all 2013); the Society of Friends (2014); the Institute of Civil Engineers; the Royal Asiatic Society; the Royal College of Physicians of London (all 2015).¹² Of these libraries, the pre-1830 books of the Leighton Library were also loaded on to the CERL database (2015).¹³

A different kind of cataloguing activity was the virtual reconstitution of the libraries of two major British scientists, Robert Hooke (1635–1703) and especially Hans Sloane (1660–1753), the latter the continuation of a project which had begun in 2008 and by the end of 2015 had listed about 32,000 titles of the estimated 45,000 in his library, and which led to additional publications in the period under question.¹⁴ Some significant catalogues of the period were printed ones: catalogues of personal libraries (some themed),¹⁵ and bibliographies of people and of types of works, from early modern play texts to works relating to literary forgery and to the East India Company.¹⁶ Anthony James West gave a salient example of the importance of the detailed recording of books by describing how copy-specific notes on Durham University Library's First Folio of Shakespeare proved that the copy taken into the Folger Shakespeare Library in 2008 was identical with the copy stolen from Durham ten years earlier, and were essential to its return.¹⁷

Digitization

Digitization was a major activity of the years 2011–2015 and took place at multiple levels: collaboratively (sometimes with international partners) and by single libraries; by commercial publishers with the products behind pay walls and in philanthropic projects to render material freely available. The British

Library, as the largest in the United Kingdom, was inevitably the most prominent. Probably the biggest project, announced in June 2011 in partnership with Google, was to digitize 250,000 out-of-copyright books, pamphlets and periodicals printed between 1700 and 1870 in a variety of European languages, focusing on material that was not yet freely available and rendering it so. Work began in 2012, and was set to last for six years. Also in June 2011, the British Library launched the 'British Library 19th Century Historical Collection' app for iPads, providing free access to digital facsimiles of about one thousand nineteenth-century British books, a figure that rose to about sixty thousand by the end of the summer. A partnership with Brightsolid enabled the digitization of over four million pages from the newspapers in the Library's collections, described as 'the most significant mass digitisation of newspapers the United Kingdom has ever seen'.¹⁸ Jisc funded a partnership between the British Library and Royal Holloway, University of London to digitize some 10,000 rare and important pieces of music from anthologies printed in the sixteenth century;¹⁹ the Library contributed penny dreadfuls and a selection of Lord Chamberlain's plays to a Gale Cengage database, 'British theatre, music and literature'; and in November 2015 it announced a digitization project entitled 'Two centuries of Indian print', to digitize thousands of early printed South Asian language books printed between 1713 and 1914 and make 'a rich collection of often unique printed materials available online for the first time'; the Library started a fundraising campaign to digitize its full collection of pre-1914 Asian printing books, amounting to some eleven million pages.²⁰ More modestly, in 2011 the Library launched an e-book treasures series of 52 manuscripts and printed books which could be downloaded as digital facsimiles on to an iPad, comprising text, video and audio interpretation. The treasures included Mercator's *Atlas* and Shakespeare's First Folio.

In a four-year project announced in 2012 and enabled by a £2 million award from the Polonsky Foundation, the Bodleian Library collaborated with the Vatican Library to digitize incunabula and early printed Hebrew books, alongside manuscript material, with the Bodleian contributing one-third of the 1.5 million pages and the results to be made freely available.²¹ Concerning very different material, it launched *Bodleian broadside ballads* (30,000 titles from the sixteenth to the twentieth century). Jisc funded a project to enable cross-searching between these ballads and the content of the English Broadside Ballad Archive in California (2011–2013).²² Jisc also funded continued work on the EEBO-TCP project, the keyboarding and encoding of text for Early English Books Online which had begun in 1998. A report of 2013 underlined the importance of the work for research on the early modern period, and in January 2015, over 25,000 texts from the first phase of the project were made freely available in the public domain.²³ In 2014 the Bodleian Library followed the British Library by making one of its First Folios freely available online, via a project begun in 2012, 'Sprint for Shakespeare', to raise money for the book's digitization and conservation.²⁴

The Wellcome Library also featured prominently between 2011 and 2015 in digitization programmes. In 2011 it declared its partnership to digitize 15,000 pre-1700 continental medical books for ProQuest's Early European Books (EEB), a full-text database of books printed in continental Europe up until 1700. Between 2011 and September 2015 it contributed to four of EEB's modules, or 'collections' (numbers 3, 4, 5 and 7), with further books due for release in collection 9; it was the only library in the United Kingdom to have contributed to EEB to date. Users based in the United Kingdom gain free access to its material. In 2014 Jisc signed an agreement with ProQuest to give higher education institutions access to collections 1–4, additionally providing access to books from the Kongelige Bibliotek in Copenhagen, the National Library of Florence, the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (National Library of the Netherlands). The Wellcome Library's second project, announced in 2014, was UK Medical Heritage Library (UK-MHL). It was to digitize some 15,000 medical books and pamphlets printed between 1780 and 1914 from its own collections in addition to material from nine partner institutions (medical and university libraries) in London, Bristol, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Jisc and the Wellcome Library funded the project.²⁵

Adam Matthews released Section Five of *Eighteenth Century Journals* in 2012, with titles from Birmingham Central Library, the British Library, Cambridge University Library and Liverpool John Moores University Library. It also released *Global Commodities* (fifteen commodities, ranging from chocolate to porcelain and timber), taking rare books together with photographs and manuscript material from eight British institutions alongside American and continental European repositories. Jisc Historic Books, a combination of Early English Books Online, Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, and nineteenth-century books from the British Library's collections, was launched in 2011. In 2014 it was succeeded by 'Historical Texts'.

Numerous smaller digitization projects took place: for example, Post Office directories issued between 1773 and 1911 and antiquarian Scottish books (National Library of Scotland); the major English masonic periodicals published before 1900 (Library and Museum of Freemasonry in collaboration with King's College London, Digital Humanities, 2012);²⁶ 453 rare editions of Euclid's *Elementa* (University College London); Welsh almanacs (National Library of Wales); over 150 London trade directories (Guildhall Library and London Metropolitan Archives); and broadside ballads for the English Broadside Ballad Archive at the University of California (University of Glasgow; National Library of Scotland). Libraries digitized not only entire collections, but individual volumes, as at the Zoological Society of London, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; striking was the digitization of the 1513 Ethiopic Psalter, the first book printed in a language of Ethiopia (King's College London and Lambeth Palace).²⁷

Promotion

Although much promotion was electronic, a continuing proliferation of treasures volumes—some written by a single individual, others by small or large groups—demonstrates the continued importance of print to mark the unique and distinctive status of libraries of different sizes and across sectors. The most expensively produced between 2011 and 2015 were for the universities of Aberdeen and Manchester.²⁸ Other libraries to publish such volumes included (in order of publication) London's Guildhall; Merton College, Oxford; Senate House Library, University of London; Anglesey Abbey (a National Trust property); St John's College and Magdalene College, Cambridge; the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh; the National Art Library; and University College London.²⁹ Having produced a treasures volume previously did not preclude new ones, as shown by volumes for Eton College, the British Library, the Bodleian Library and (in six bulky parts) for St Andrews University.³⁰ Cambridge and Glasgow Universities produced volumes restricted to incunabula in connection with their incunabula cataloguing projects.³¹

The Cambridge and Glasgow volumes further linked with exhibitions, and another way that libraries showed their belief in the power of print as a promotional medium was through the spread of exhibition publications: exhibition catalogues, sometimes with supporting essays; and essays without a catalogue. The British Library had long generated such publications. In the years 2011–2015 it was joined not only, in accordance with common museum practice, by museums exhibiting manuscripts or rare books, such as the Ashmolean Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, and (exhibiting in London) the Blackburn Museum, but by SOAS and other major academic libraries, particularly the Bodleian Library. Such publications included the opportunity to showcase rare books held in private hands (William Zachs's books in Edinburgh; the Arcadian Library in London).³²

Libraries across the United Kingdom commemorated the four hundredth anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible (1611–2011) and, along with libraries in Italy, Sweden, Australia and the United States, the five-hundredth anniversary in 2015 of the death of Aldus Manutius. The Bodleian Library (in collaboration with the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington), Cambridge University Library and Lambeth Palace led the biblical commemorations, concentrating on the contributions to the translation of their own scholars. Eton College (which emphasized the contribution of one of its Provosts) and Euston Hall, near Peterborough, joined national, university and other libraries to commemorate from their own perspectives the production of one of the most iconic books in the English language. Aldine celebrations in England began with colloquia at the Warburg Institute on 6 February 2015, the precise date of the anniversary ('The afterlife of Aldus') and at All Souls College, Oxford on 7 February ('The printed achievement of Aldus Manutius'). The John Rylands Library, Manchester held the major Aldine exhibition in the United Kingdom, logically in terms of its 2,000-item strong Aldine collection. The British and Bodleian Libraries, Senate House Library

(University of London), Cambridge and Glasgow University Libraries, and Eton and Winchester Colleges also mounted exhibitions.³³

The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 came in for some attention in 2015, with major exhibitions at Cambridge University Library, the Brontë parsonage at Haworth ('The Brontës, art and Waterloo') and Dove Cottage ('Wordsworth, war and Waterloo'). The eight hundredth anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta in 2015 was commemorated above all in a major exhibition at the British Library. Anniversaries of events of literary or historical significance which featured in single substantial exhibitions were the seven hundredth anniversary of the birth of Boccaccio, commemorated at the John Rylands Library in 2013, and the 1715 Jacobite rising, celebrated in an exhibition at the National Library of Scotland, 'Game of crowns'. One major anniversary which was barely marked was the 450th anniversary in 2014 of the birth of William Shakespeare, libraries generally preferring to wait another two years to mark the four hundredth anniversary of his death.

Teaching

University courses based around rare books increased during the period in question. The London Rare Books School at the University of London's Institute of English Studies continued to thrive and added new week-long courses of varying relevance to rare book librarianship, including 'The printed book in the east', 'The history of readers and reading, 1770–2010' (both 2014), and 'The history and practice of hand press printing' (2015). Elsewhere, new courses began. In Oxford, the Bodleian Libraries Centre for the Study of the Book hosted its first week-long summer school in 2012 on 'Bibliography and the study of paper', targeted at academic researchers, special collections staff, conservators, historians, and collectors. In 2011 James Raven founded a Centre for Bibliographical History within the Department of History at the University of Essex. The Centre was described as meeting 'a critical local and regional need in the enhancement of heritage management, rare books library coordination as well as training in book history, librarianship and information studies'. It aimed in the long term to establish a School of Library, Information and Bibliographical Studies, professionally affiliated to CILIP—a goal in which it would be preceded in 2016, slightly outside the time period under consideration, by the University of Edinburgh's Centre for the History of the Book.³⁴ In November 2015 Birmingham City University and the University of Birmingham launched a joint initiative, the Centre for Printing History and Culture, described as consisting of academics, curators, librarians and printers from across the region, and seeking to encourage research into all aspects and periods of printing history and culture, as well as education and training in the art and practice of printing.³⁵ More securely within the context of library education, the University of Dundee introduced a long distance course module within its Centre for Archive and Information studies (CAIS) on rare book librarianship, taught by staff at the National Library of Scotland among others. Whilst the use of rare books

within other courses was nothing new, awareness of their value was perhaps sharpened by the desire for object-based learning, beginning with the museum community and pioneered in a higher education context at University College London. The John Rylands Library in Manchester benefited from Jisc funding awarded to the University of Manchester and Mimas in 2011 to pioneer an augmented reality (AR) application for special collections, to use digital resources alongside physical objects to best effect.³⁶

The usual annual rounds of bibliographical lectures and conferences took place: the Panizzi lectures at the British Library, the Lyell and the McKenzie lectures at Oxford, and Sandars lectures in Cambridge; the two-day Print Networks and the Book Trade History conferences. So did training sessions on such matters as cataloguing, provenance, binding, and conservation, undertaken by the CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group (RBSCG) and the Historic Libraries Forum, ending with the Rare Books and Special Collections Group's 'new professionals day' in November 2015 for newcomers to the field of rare book and special collections. The CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group held its annual three-day study conference on the following topics: 'If you've got it, flaunt it!' (outreach; Durham, 2011); 'Speaking truth to power' (advocacy; Oxford, 2012); 'The future of the past: digitisation of rare and special materials' (Canterbury, 2013); 'New space for old books: building for the future' (Aberdeen, 2014); and, inspired by the forthcoming third edition of the *Directory of rare book and special collections in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland*, 'Hidden collections: revealed' (London, 2015).³⁷ Exploitation of collections and digitization were also among the themes of the Historic Libraries Forum's annual day-long conferences, which further covered resources, dispersals, and projects.³⁸

Acquisitions and disposals

Inevitably the period 2011–2015 saw some disposals. The most publicized of these, attracting national press coverage and scholarly protest, was the breaking up of the Mendham Collection bequeathed to the Law Society in perpetuity and deposited at Canterbury Cathedral: a theological collection of about 5,000 books and manuscripts, including rich holdings from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, amassed by the Anglican clergyman Joseph Mendham (1769–1856). In 2012 the Law Society offered the best books for sale through Sotheby's, and in 2013 it decided to remove the rest, with further sales in June 2013 and March 2014.³⁹ Wigan Public Library sold its rare books (illustrated books, incunabula and STC books) in 2011, and Westminster College, Cambridge sold books acquired from Cheshunt College in 2012: both instances incurred criticism for lack of consultation and failure to follow due procedure.⁴⁰

Other sales avoided such adverse comment. In 2011 Worcester Public Library sold some of its rare books, ranging from the *Comoediae* of Plautus (Aldus Manutius, 1522) to the first edition of Coleridge's *Christabel*.⁴¹ St Augustine's Abbey in Ramsgate, downsizing, sold off its books in 2011, and

the Birmingham Medical Institute sold its rare book collection in two sales of 2012, raising thereby more than £400,000.⁴² When two spectacular biblical manuscripts changed hands, the tone was triumphant as the libraries in which they had been deposited managed, with considerable financial assistance, to purchase them: the British Library raised the £9 million necessary to purchase the late-seventh-century Stonyhurst, or ‘St Cuthbert’ Gospel, considered to be the earliest intact European book, in 2012 from the Society of Jesus, while Cambridge University Library was able to purchase the Codex Zacynthius (a palimpsest of Luke’s Gospel) from the Bible Society in 2014.⁴³ The outcome of the sales and the reaction to them underlined the nature of fear pertaining to sales, namely that they may break up the integrity of collections, and that previously publicly available material might disappear into private hands, avoided in both these cases.

Any news pertaining to a Shakespeare First Folio invariably grabs newspaper headlines, be it a sale or, as happened in St Omer in November 2014, the discovery of a previously unrecorded copy,⁴⁴ and lively interest arose when in September 2013 library director Christopher Pressler proposed to sell a set of the first four Shakespeare folios from Senate House Library, University of London—a sale which was halted just three days later. Non-bibliographical aspects indubitably fuelled much of the public attention. As with the Mendham collection, a broader moral issue came into play—in this instance, that the folios in question had been given to the University of London as part of a named special collection to be kept together in perpetuity—deepening into intrigue with the revelation of a potential conflict of interest in Pressler’s selection of the auction house to conduct the sale.⁴⁵ From a bibliographical perspective, the matter brought niceties usually restricted to scholars and curators about books printed in the hand-press period, such as that there is no such thing as a duplicate, into wide public consciousness, with articles appearing not only in the British press, but as far afield as Canada’s *Globe and mail* and New Zealand’s *Timaru herald* and the 2,732 signatories of a petition against the sale mounted by the Bibliographical Society coming from such disparate countries as France, the United States and Australia as well as from Britain.⁴⁶ In an age where digital material is increasingly important, and in which historical bibliography is not a standard element of library education, it may be regarded as encouraging that a library director was expected to understand the importance of physical books in his care.⁴⁷

Restitution constituted a welcome balance to sales. The return to Lambeth Palace Library of some 1,400 books, mainly from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, which had been stolen from it in 1975, was reported in April 2013.⁴⁸ Conservation and online cataloguing followed their return—the former sadly necessary, as many of the books had been badly mutilated in an effort to remove evidence of provenance.

Despite budgetary restrictions, the years 2011–2015 also saw some significant acquisitions, both of single items (some resulting from the above-mentioned sales) and of entire collections. Some acquisitions of collections

reflected transfers from one institution to another, such as the High Council Library of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (some 2,300 books, largely esoteric, from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries) to the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London (2011); the 3,000-volume strong personal library of clergyman, author and antiquarian Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924) from the National Trust property Killerton House to Exeter University Library (2012); the Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Loughborough parish libraries from Loughborough University to the University of Nottingham (2013); the library of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District (about 2,500 volumes) to the Armit Museum and Library in Cumbria (2014); a collection of 1,600 children's books, mainly from the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, from Somerset Library Services to Bristol University Library (2014); and the historic music collection from St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh (over 4,000 items in 429 volumes) to Armagh Public Library in 2015.⁴⁹ By far the most significant transfer in terms of the sheer quantity of items was that of the Women's Library (some 60,000 books and pamphlets on all aspects of the position of women in society) from the London Metropolitan University to the London School of Economics in 2013. Smaller but still significant transfers were in particular of religious collections: following the closure of Wesley College Bristol in 2012, its 3,600 or so early printed books joined the strong Methodist collections of the John Rylands Library in Manchester in 2014, while the Catholic National Library at St Michael's Abbey in Farnborough, which closed in 2014 for lack of resources, moved in 2015 to the University of Durham.⁵⁰ On occasion printed books were transferred from libraries to archives: pre-1800 books from the Home Office Library to the National Archives (2011); the Dean Newcome Library (i.e. the personal library of John Newcome (1684?–1765)) from Grantham Public Library to Lincolnshire Archives (2013).

Libraries across various sectors received donations of collections, of which this paragraph is intended to convey an impression of diversity rather than to supply a complete list. Whilst many gifts were of modern special collections material, early printed books were present among the 620 volumes of Latin and Greek textbooks from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century given by Christopher Stray to Trinity College Cambridge in 2011; in the Malkiewitz Collection of material from 1474 to the twentieth century, particularly strong in French Revolutionary pamphlets, given to Edinburgh University Library in 2012; and in the Scottish collection given to Innerpefferay Library in 2013, two hundred first editions from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries relating to Scottish history and culture.⁵¹ Two large modern collections acquired during the period were the Pressler Kahan Tauchnitz collections of about 8,000 volumes, given to the National Library of Scotland in 2011, the largest Tauchnitz collection in the United Kingdom, and the Mary Turner collection deposited in London's Bishopsgate Library in 2013 of approximately 2,000 twentieth-century books and pamphlets relating to the history of labour and working life in the Caribbean and Central America. Other collections acquired

ranged from the working library of the philologist E. V. Gordon and his wife Ida, given to St Andrews University in 2012, to 400 volumes by or relating to Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning given to Eton College in 2012, Charles Chadwyck-Healey's material pertaining to the liberation of France after World War Two, given to Cambridge University Library from 2013, sixty boxes of theatre programmes collected by Adrian Brown (theatre director and friend of Terence Rattigan) and given to the British Library in 2014, and 800 British left-wing political pamphlets collected by labour historian Henry Pelling given to Senate House Library, University of London, in 2015. Two Oxford colleges benefited from gifts of modern author collections: a T. S. Eliot collection to Merton College (2011); the Neil Ritchie Sitwell Collection, with some 1,980 titles the largest of such gifts, also to Merton College (2012); collections of Swinburne (2013) and of Graham Greene (2015) to Balliol College.

The Friends of the National Libraries assisted in the acquisition of numerous single items to libraries both large and small.⁵² The majority of their gifts were archives or manuscripts. However, some were printed books, enhancing existing collection strengths: for example, two seventeenth-century editions of Milton to the Milton Cottage Trust, one of which, the fifth edition of *Paradise lost*, completed their collection of seventeenth-century editions of that poem (2011); six books on fencing, including Paride des Pozzo's influential *Duello* (Venice, 1544) to the Wallace Collection's collection of books on fencing (2012); Richard Mocket's *Doctrina et politia ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1617), which had strayed from the library of Archbishop Abbot (d. 1633) to join his other books at Lambeth Palace (2012); extensively revised page proofs of Tennyson's 'To the Queen' to the Tennyson Research Centre, Lincoln Central Library (2013); Priscian's *Opera*, edited by Benedictus Brognolus (Venice: Filippo Pinzi, 20 June 1492) in a contemporary Cambridge binding to Cambridge University Library. Of the gifts they funded, Leonard Baskin's *Horned beetles and other insects*, the first book issued by the Gehenna Press (1958) and one of just thirty copies printed, acquired by the Bodleian Library in 2012, was the only copy in the United Kingdom, while the first edition of Ann Walker's eighteenth-century *A complete guide for a servant-maid, or, The sure means of gaining love and esteem*, given to the Geffrye Museum in Hackney (specializing in the home), also in 2012, was unique. Of special cultural significance was the Aberdeen breviary, one of the first books published in Scotland, acquired by the National Library of Scotland and promptly digitized.⁵³

Buildings and services

Resources, stretched in the previous five-year period, remained a challenge, resulting in the reduction in some places of staff or opening hours. Most drastic was the temporary closure for financial reasons of the St Bride Printing Library, home to many trade documents and type specimens among other items, announced in August 2015 and causing dismay from the American continents as well as from within Britain, as shown by reactions on the email

list of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP).⁵⁴ (The library re-opened for one day per month in 2016, staffed by volunteers.) Cambridge University Library bucked the trend of reduced opening hours by opening its special collections reading rooms half an hour earlier each morning. Certain services, however, increased. Cambridge University Library (2011/12), Edinburgh University Library (2011) and the British Library (2015) were among the libraries which decided to allow self-service photography within their rare book reading rooms: to judge from an impromptu survey carried out during the CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group's annual conference in 2014, this practice became the norm.

A general paucity of funds did not exclude building work: not for nothing did the CILIP Rare Book and Special Collections Group hold its annual study conference for 2014 on the theme 'New space for old books: building for the future'. Most spectacularly, the Weston Library, housing the special collections of the Bodleian Libraries, opened to readers in September 2014; the public opening took place in March 2015, to wide press coverage.⁵⁵ The National Library of Scotland opened a new special collections reading room in 2012, with space for up to 36 readers. Beyond the legal deposit libraries, Aberdeen University's special collections moved in 2011 from the King's College site to new environmentally controlled storage at the Sir Duncan Rice Library (officially opened in September 2012), and some Oxford Colleges amended their conditions for storing rare books: for example, Balliol College moved its special collections to the repurposed St Cross Church, Holywell, in 2011, whilst the Upper Library of the Queen's College, housing its rare books, underwent refurbishment 2013–2014.⁵⁶ Two university special collections joined forces with public ones to be rehoused in new buildings, those of the University of Worcester joining Worcester Public Library in 'The Hive' (opened in 2012), and those of the University of Sussex, together with the collections of the East Sussex Record Office and the Royal Pavilion and Museums, moving into The Keep in Brighton (2013).⁵⁷

Several building or refurbishment projects involved exhibition space. In 2011/12 Cambridge University Library, helped by a gift of \$1,200,000 over eleven years from the Howard and Abby Milstein Foundation, transformed its provision for exhibitions—although this included new virtual exhibition space and greater use of digital technologies to enhance physical exhibitions, rather than comprising pure building refurbishment. In 2011 Palace Green Library of Durham University opened its newly refurbished Wolfson Gallery, designed as a safe exhibition space, with the opening of further refurbished areas, including the Barker Research Library as a special collections reading room, between then and 2013. Heritage Lottery funding assisted the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds to open new exhibition space at the end of 2015 for a permanent display of library treasures alongside a series of changing exhibitions, and Liverpool's Hornby Library restored its Oak Room, to house a permanent exhibition of rare books from Liverpool's special collections (2012).⁵⁸ In the exact opposite of growth, a fire in 2014 destroyed the

Macintosh Library at the Glasgow School of Art, including some of its rare books.⁵⁹

Incunabula

Work on incunabula flourished. Projects at the Universities of Cambridge and Glasgow to catalogue their respective incunabula online, emphasizing provenance and other copy-specific details, constituted the most extensive activity. Cambridge's project, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, ran from 2009 until 2014; Glasgow's (launched in 2011) from 2010 until 2015. Given the sheer strengths of holdings in both libraries, the projects would have been significant had they comprised nothing but online cataloguing: Cambridge holds some 4,600 titles and Glasgow University, with more incunabula than any other single Scottish repository, 1,060. But both extended far beyond the electronic description of individual books. Exhibitions and treasure volumes have already been mentioned. In addition to these and project blogs, Glasgow developed a detailed website and Cambridge a provenance index.⁶⁰ Cambridge further held a series of masterclasses on incunabula, led by leading scholars in the field, and a one-day conference, 'Incunabula on the move' (Clare College, 6 March 2012), the proceedings of which were published in a special issue of the *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*.⁶¹

Elsewhere, the Brotherton Library in Leeds enhanced the online catalogue records for its 340-odd incunabula with copy-specific information (2014), and began to follow this up the following year with an online learning resource based around an extensively annotated copy of Ovid (Parma: Stephanus Corallus, 1 July 1477),⁶² while London's Guildhall Library received the National Acquisitions Group Award for Excellence 2014 for its twelve-month project adding provenance information to the catalogue records for its 73 incunabula and digitizing annotated pages, involving crowdsourcing by encouraging researchers to transcribe some of the more challenging annotations. The Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL) project 'Material evidence in incunabula' (MEI), commenced in 2010 to record the copy-specific features of incunabula, expanded. The holdings of fourteen libraries in the United Kingdom were either on MEI or in the process of being added by the end of 2015, with numbers of incunabula ranging from two (St Hilda's College, Oxford, and a private collection in Lancaster) to 10,500 (the British Library; a CERL intern input the information); libraries represented included Eton and Winchester Colleges, Lambeth Palace, further Oxford colleges and the Bodleian Library, London's Guildhall Library, the Middle Temple, and St Andrews University.⁶³ In 2013 the European Research Council awarded funding for a five-year project based at Oxford, 'The 15th-century book trade: an evidence-based assessment and visualisation of the distribution, sale and reception of books in the Renaissance', looking at the movement and readership of incunabula, their contemporary market value, the transmission of their texts, the circulation of their illustrations, and at visualization.⁶⁴

British-based scholars produced two printed studies of incunabula. Kristian Jensen's *Revolution and the antiquarian book: reshaping the past*, the revision of his Lyell lectures of 2008, concerned the changing status of, and attitudes towards, incunabula in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while Lotte Hellinga's *Texts in transit* discussed the printing of incunabula, with twelve case studies.⁶⁵ The period also saw a handsomely produced printed catalogue of the seventy incunabula and seventeen fragments in Westminster Abbey and School.⁶⁶

Bindings

Two databases represented important work on bookbindings. The British armorial bindings database, begun by John Morris (d. 2005) of the National Library of Scotland in 1964 and continued by Philip Oldfield of the University of Toronto, was launched in September 2012. The database, which attempts to record all known British armorial bookbinding stamps used by personal owners to mark and decorate their books, reproduces over 3,300 stamps used between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, associated with nearly two thousand individual owners.⁶⁷ In access as in creation the database was a fine piece of international cooperation, being hosted by the University of Toronto and sponsored to make it available as a free public resource by the Bibliographical Society. In June 2015 Ligatus, a research centre at the University of the Arts London, launched the Language of Binding online thesaurus of bookbinding terms, which aimed 'to present a consistent vocabulary for the use of all those who work with early bindings, built wherever possible on existing resources, but adapted for use in an on-line hierarchical environment that will allow terms that are not known to a user to be found'.⁶⁸ The major British printed publications on bindings of the period concerned the provenance and bindings of books in the Arcadian Library, a private library in London, and Giles Barber's posthumous work—essays and a catalogue—on 790 seventeenth- and eighteenth-century books amassed by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in the late nineteenth century.⁶⁹

Publications

The platform for the British Book Trade Index moved from Birmingham to the University of Oxford in 2015, giving it stability for the foreseeable future.⁷⁰ Significant books which appeared on the subjects of printing, publishing and the book trade were Peter W. M. Blayney's two-volume *The Stationers' Company and the printers of London, 1501–1577*, a history of the Stationers' Company up until its incorporation described in one review as 'a complete rewriting of the history of the book trade in England';⁷¹ a three-volume, multi-authored history of Oxford University Press;⁷² two interrelated books by James Raven on the eighteenth-century London book trade;⁷³ and Laurence Worms and Ashley Baynton-Williams's *British map engravers*, which assembled almost all that is known of the over 1,500 figures who created, printed or sold maps in Great Britain from the sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth

century.⁷⁴ Monographs on Chetham's Library and of Richard Porson's books (both published outside the United Kingdom) included discussion of the book trade in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries respectively.⁷⁵ Further publications concerned directories of the book trades in Ipswich (about 1,000 traders) and Kent (over 4,500 entries),⁷⁶ magazine publishing,⁷⁷ the Renaissance and early modern book trades,⁷⁸ additional histories of particular publishers (Chambers; John Murray) and booksellers (Sotheran),⁷⁹ and the publishing history of particular authors or books.⁸⁰ Type was represented chiefly by Cyril Cannon's *The compositor in London*, an updated version of his doctoral thesis of 1961 about typesetting from the fifteenth century to the present, and by a history of the Monotype Corporation.⁸¹

More broadly, Cambridge University Press issued a volume on the history of the book in its series of Cambridge companions.⁸² Joad Raymond produced the first volume of *The Oxford history of popular print culture*, going up to the Restoration.⁸³ Two volumes within national histories of the book appeared, for eighteenth-century Scotland and for twentieth-century Ireland.⁸⁴ *Old books, new technologies*, by David McKitterick, dealt with the representation and interpretation of old books from 1700 onwards, highlighting among other matters the relationship between print and pixel which featured so largely in library activity across the years 2011–2015.⁸⁵ This book won the DeLong SHARP Book History book prize in 2014.

Alison Cullingford's *The special collections handbook*, the first manual for special collections librarianship since the now outdated second revised edition of Roderick Cave's *Rare book librarianship* (1982) appeared in 2011 and immediately became an essential textbook. Recognizing how quickly the field moves, Cullingford maintained a blog for currency.⁸⁶ In 2014 libraries large and small throughout the British Isles, from a prison to a palace, updated information on their special collections holdings for the third edition of the *Directory of rare book and special collections in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland*.

Conclusion

Three events not mentioned above stood out for the writer of this overview. Edinburgh University Library and the National Library of Scotland—two libraries with plenty of material to mount independent exhibitions—combined forces to hold an exhibition at the National Library, 'Beyond Macbeth: Shakespeare in Scottish collections' (December 2011–March 2012),⁸⁷ and in 2014 a group of rare book librarians based in the north of England was formed to provide support and networking opportunities by sharing experiences and developments in their institutions, comparable with Rare Books in Scotland further north.⁸⁸ Seen alongside the collaboration often undertaken with digitization projects and shown newly in 2011–2015 in some building works, these examples of cooperation indicated the value of strength together. In 2014 the Universities of Oxford and London followed Cambridge in offering a student book collecting competition and prize, encouraging the development

of incipient special collections; the Universities of Edinburgh, St Andrews and Aberdeen followed suit in 2015.⁸⁹ Thereby the value of the physical book and of groups of physical books was yet again celebrated. Whatever challenges lay ahead, there was scope for optimism too.⁹⁰

Notes

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- 3 Jackie Dooley *et al.*, 'Survey of Special Collections and Archives in the United Kingdom and Ireland'. OCLC Research, 2013. <<http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2013/2013-01.pdf>>.
- 4 RLUK (Research Libraries UK), 'Nothing hidden, nothing lost: exposing and exploiting our collections'. <<http://www.rluk.ac.uk/strategy-2014-17/hidden-lost-exposing-exploiting-collections/>>.
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- 6 Available at: <<http://rbms.info/files/dcrm/dcrmb/DCRMB3.pdf>>.
- 7 Paula Williams, 'Guide to cataloguing printed maps': <<http://www.historiclibrariesforum.org.uk/hlf/Guides/Mapcataloguing.pdf>>; Elizabeth Quarumby-Lawrence, 'Guide to cataloguing printed music': <<http://www.historiclibrariesforum.org.uk/hlf/Guides/CataloguingMusic.pdf>>.
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- 11 See St John's College, 'About the Samuel Butler project': <<http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/about-samuel-butler-project>>.
- 12 For the rare book significance of each of these libraries and hence of the value of awareness of them, see Karen Attar (ed.), *Directory of rare book and special collections in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland*, 3rd ed. London: Facet, 2016.
- 13 Consortium of European Research Libraries, *News* 31, June 2015, 12.
- 14 Hooke's books database: <<http://www.hookesbooks.com/hookes-books-database/>>; British Library, Sloane printed books project: <<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/>>

- findhelprestype/prbooks/sloaneprintedbooksproject/sloaneprinted.html>. Articles on the Sloane project published between 2011 and 2015 are: Amy Blakeway, 'The library catalogues of Sir Hans Sloane: their authors, organization, and functions', *Electronic British Library journal* 2011; Alison Walker, 'Sir Hans Sloane and the library of Dr Luke Rugeley', *The library* 7th ser. **15**, 2014, 383–409; Júlio Costa, 'Sloane's Portuguese Books', *Electronic British Library journal* 2015; and essays in Alison Walker, Arthur Macgregor, and Michael Hunter (ed.), *From books to bezoars: Sir Hans Sloane and his collections*. London: British Library, 2012. I am indebted to an email from James Freeman, 26 Jan. 2016, for the information given concerning the Sloane project.
- 15 See Joseph L. Black, *Private libraries in Renaissance England: a collection and catalogue of Tudor and early Stuart book-lists. Vol. 8: PLRE 167–260*. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014; James S. Dearden, *The library of John Ruskin*. Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 2012 (2,969 entries); *The Surtees collection: fiction in English 1600–1900: a catalogue of the collection of Anthony Conyers Surtees*, 2 vol. Farnham: A. Surtees, 2014 (c. 8,000 titles, mainly from the Victorian period); Giancarlo De Vivo (ed.), *Catalogue of the library of Piero Sraffa*, with an essay on Piero Sraffa and his books by Luigi L. Pasinetti. Milan: Mattioli; Turin: Einaudi, 2014 (just under 7,000 titles on economic theory, with much provenance information).
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- 21 See Bodleian Libraries, 'Bodleian and Vatican libraries to digitise ancient texts', 12 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/news/2012/bodleian-and-the-vatican-libraries>>.
- 22 Bodleian Library, *Bodleian Library broadside ballads*. <<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads/>>.
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