

Price-Codes and Provenance

Peter Kidd

Warburg Institute, 11 March 2015

pjkidd@gmail.com

mssprovenance.blogspot.co.uk

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- What are price-codes?
- Reasons to care about them
- What to record

What are price-codes?

- used by a buyer (bookseller or private collector), to keep the purchase-price secret
- usually consist of a 10-letter code-word representing the numerals 1–9 and 0 (i.e. if the code-word is “MANUSCRIPT”, then “M”=1, “A”=2, “N”=3, etc.)
- sometimes symbols or a non-Latin alphabet are used

THE PRICE-CODES
of the
BOOK-TRADE
A preliminary guide

by
EXHUMATION

BERKELEY
Ian Jackson
2010

The only detailed study of
price-codes

Index

Adlard, George	PUBLISHERZ
Arader, W. Graham	PENSYLVAI
Archer, Thomas	SAX
L'Art Ancien	ROSENTHALJ, ZWICKMÜHLE
Balding, R. & J.	MOTHERFUCK
*Baskin, Leonard	REMBRANDT
Beeleigh Abbey Books	TRAYLENSK
*Bennett, Richard	WORSLEYDAM
Bennett & Marshall	MARBENDICK
Block, Andrew	ANDREBLOCK
*Board, Fred	FLEISCHMAN
Bohn, Henry George	BETHANKFUL
Breman, Paul	PAULGRINKE
Breslauer, B.H.	SEMPRAVNTI
Brick Row Book Shop, The	CHRYSOLITE
Christie's	DOJUSTICE
*Clawson, John Lewis	<i>see appendix</i>
Commin, Horace J.	PUSHONWARD
*Corder, Joan	HERALDICMS
Dawson's of Pall Mall	CUMBERLAND
Dobell, Percy John	TWMGJRLAN
Eberstadt, Edward	MEXICANWAR
Edwards, Francis	MYGODHELPS
Eggert, Fritz	BROCKHAUSE
Eisemann, Heinrich	DEUTSCHLAN
Evans, Robert Harding	JACKBOWDEN, αβγδεζηθιKAMNOΠ
*Field, Eugene	MARYFIELDX
Fotheringham, Alex	STONEBRIDG
Garvin, Jack	MONEYTALKS
*Gennadius, Johannes	γεναδιοζωη

Some collectors, dealers,
and their code-words

HEMINGWAY

HERALDICMS

*Joan Corder (1921-2005).

Identified by John Blatchly in *The Private Library* for Winter 2006, p.159.

HIERONYMUS

HOVERZACKS

A.S.W. Rosenbach (1876-1952).

According to Elizabeth Fuller, Rosenbach Librarian, 'N is used as an alternative zero ... to avoid the obviousness of doubles. In a string of zeros, either S or N may come first, but they always alternate. Repeat of a non-zero digit is indicated by following it with X'. The last two letters indicate cents.

JACKBOWDEN

Robert Harding Evans (1777-1857).

This was the auctioneer's code for recording bids. N was ten. It was in use until circa 1821. Identified in Marc Vaulbert de Chantilly: *Robert Harding Evans of Pall Mall: auction catalogues 1812-1846: a provisional list* (London, The Vanity Press of Bethnal Green, 2002), p.vi (note 27).

JACOBSMITH

John Sicher Van Eisen Kohn (1906-76).

JOHNRUYLE

*John Ruyle (1934-2008) of Berkeley, California.

JOHNUPDIKE

JROSENWALD

*Lessing Julius Rosenwald (1891-1979).

This has never been recorded in print, for even long after Rosenwald's death, the authorities in Washington remain curiously

Appendix

Ω U O O - > ♂ ♀ 4 *

*Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753).

Identified in M.A.E. Nickson: 'Sloane's Codes: the solution to a Mystery' in *Factotum* 7 (1979), pp.13-8.

Δ ⊥ S Φ ± □ Γ Θ Λ Ψ

*John Lewis Clawson (1865-1933).

Identified in William A. Jackson: 'John L. Clawson's Early English Books' in *To Doctor R: Essays Here Collected and Published in Honor of the Seventieth Birthday of A.S.W. Rosenbach, July 22, 1946* edited by Percy E. Lawler, John Fleming and Edwin Wolf 2nd (Philadelphia, The Rosenbach Company, 1946), pp.98-9: 'Mr. Clawson carefully marked in pencil at the top of the recto of the front fly-leaf of all his books the cost, in cipher, and the source and date of purchase. His cipher was a simple one, made up of symbols including Greek letters ... with X for repeated numbers. For example, the following inscription

⊥ S Ψ X Ψ X Mostyn R 19

may be interpreted "\$2300 Mostyn sale, through Rosenbach, 1919".'

[(< -= + >)]*

The characters above the numbers on the top of an old-style typewriter keyboard.

Code-words and their users

Examples using symbols

80/31

44/156

87/1

UU77

7784

HSA/2

Δ74/1

Δ77
1000

M340
X700/1

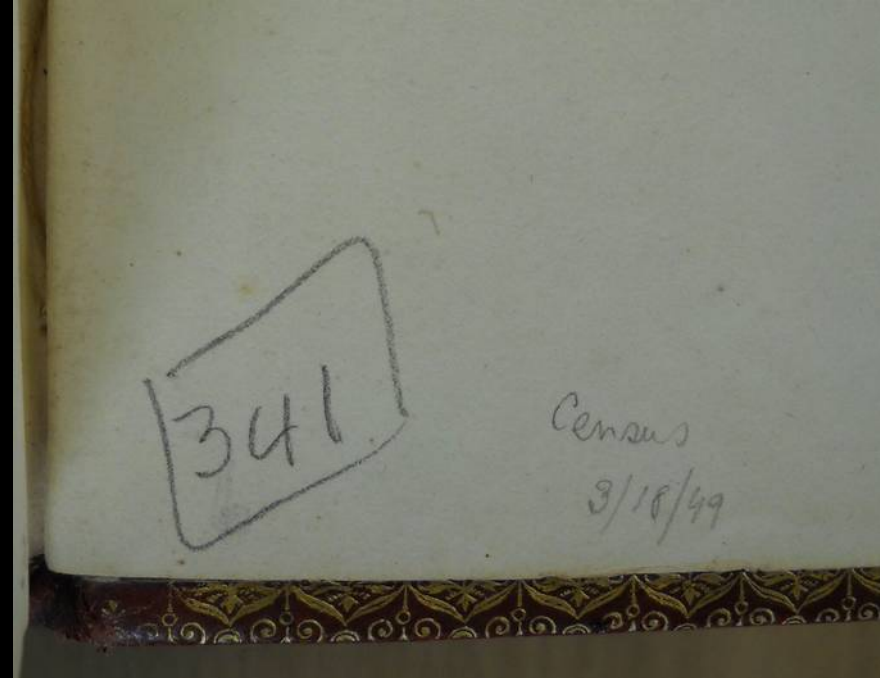
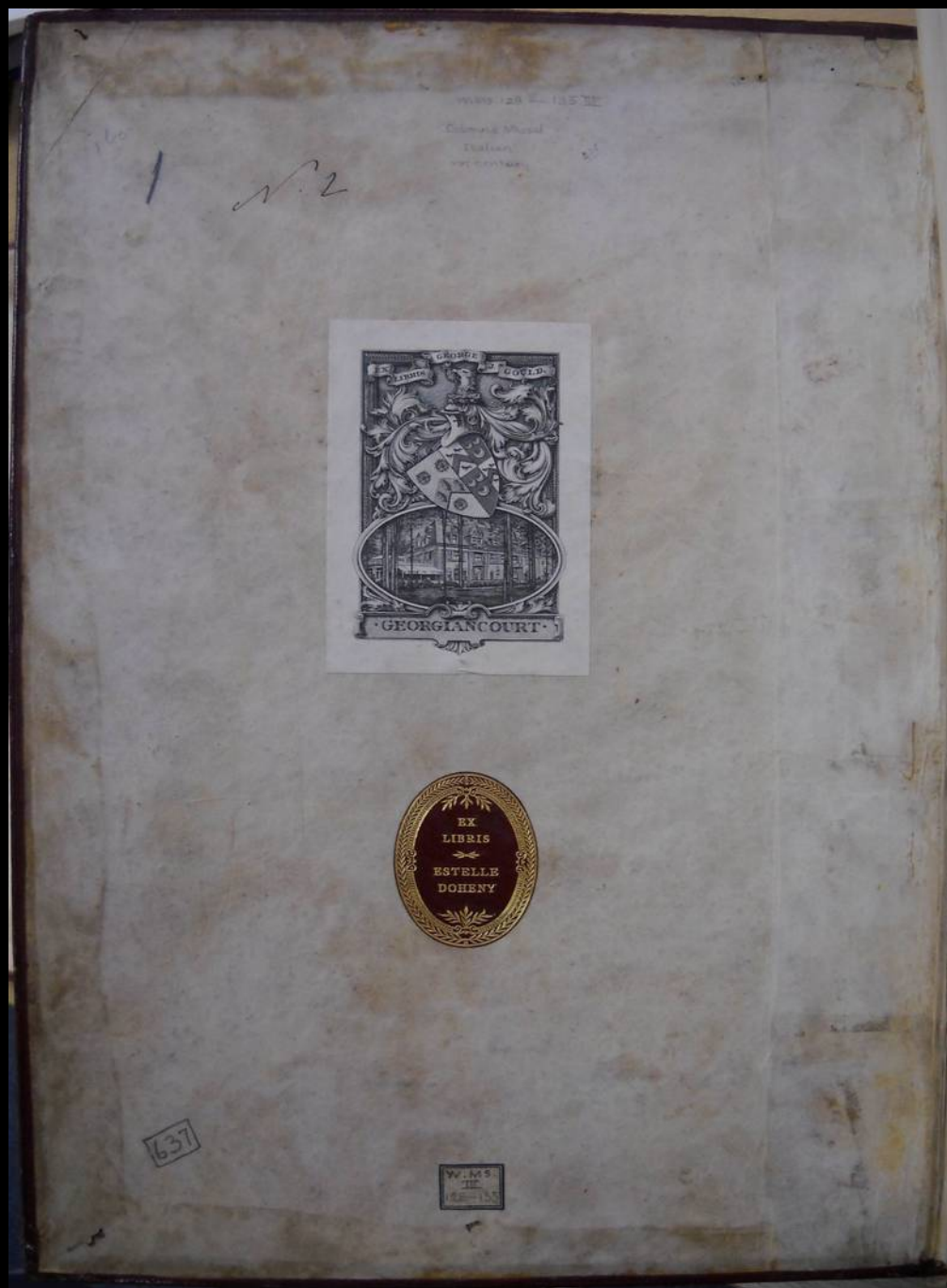
F. 19

F.F. 0444
May/1925

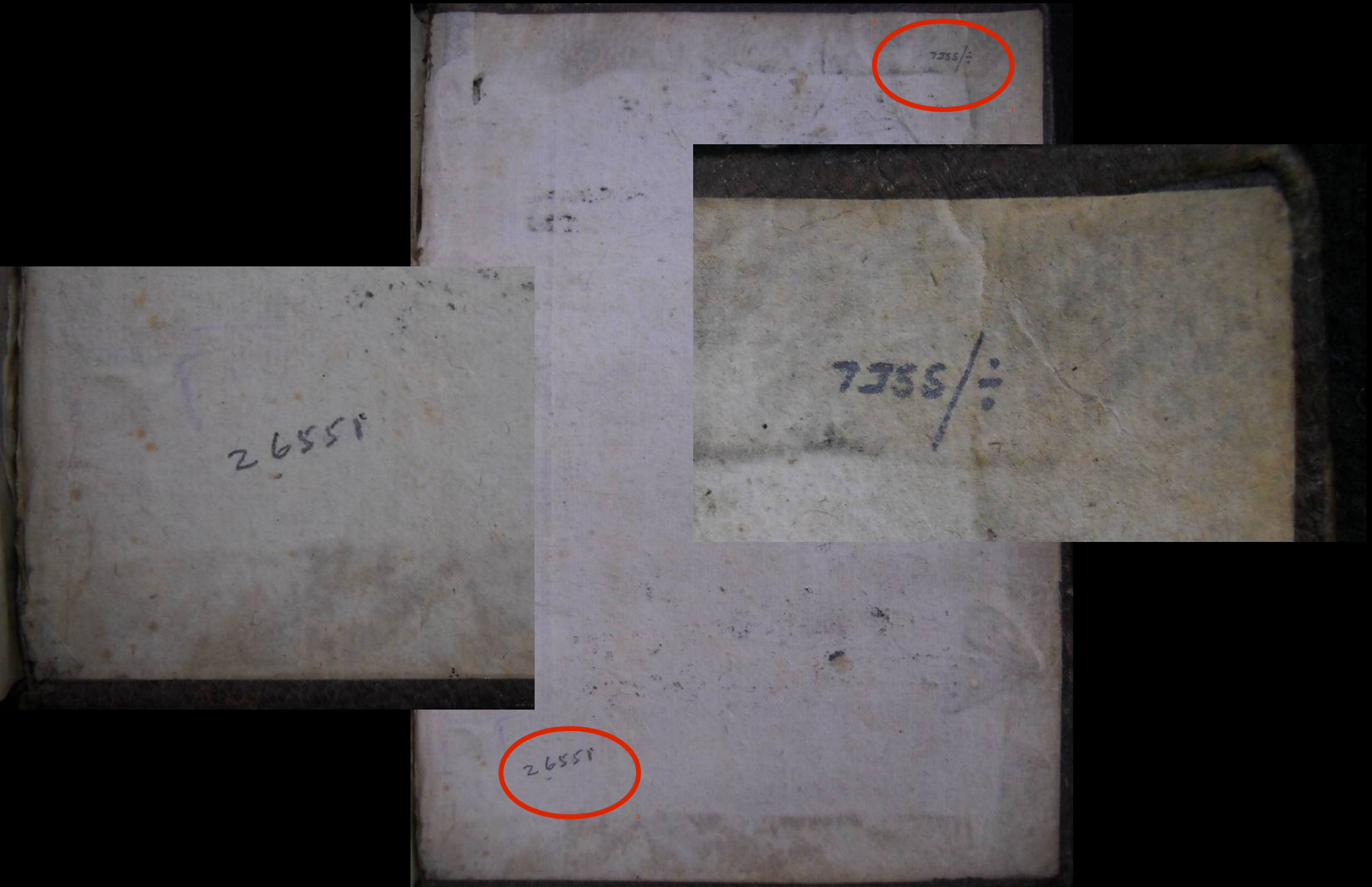
Some 20th-century examples

Reasons to care about price-codes (and related marks)

- they are provenance in themselves
- they may lead the researcher to previous provenance
- they may lead the researcher to a previous catalogue description containing useful information, such as a previous state of the book (e.g. before rebinding), and work done by a previous cataloguer (e.g. identification of heraldic arms)



A mark characteristic of books sold by Quaritch in the 1920s and '30s



Quaritch: price-code using symbols, and stock-number

1/59
2500

5000
~~2500~~

2-1-19
hacou

C 5/16
apoo

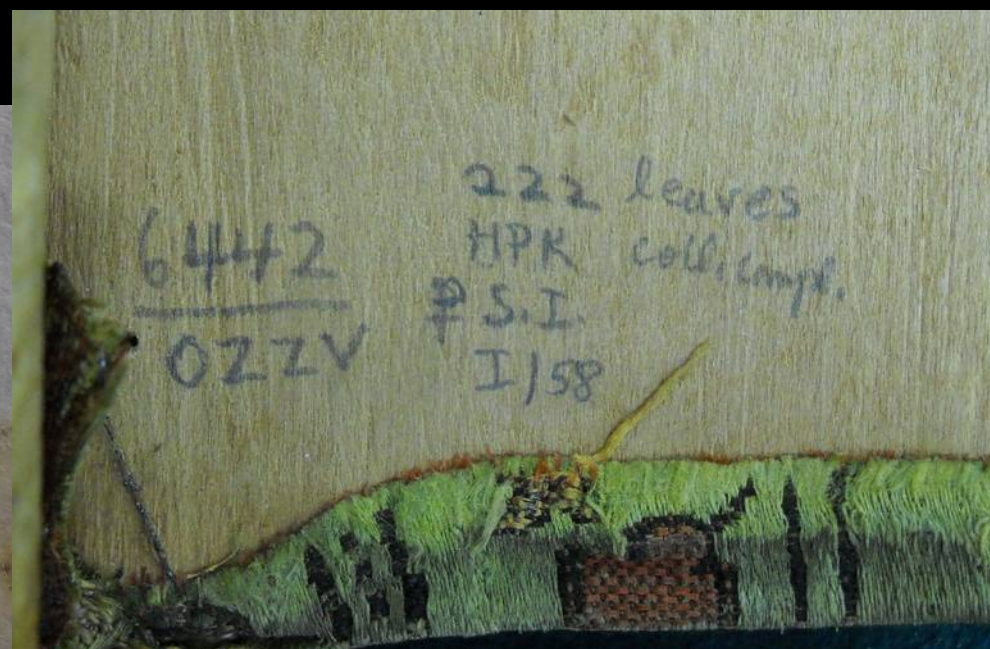
4wls
hinsou
hwea

axxew

G 2/72
hacou

Maggs Bros: price-codes, sometimes with the acquisition-date

1² 2-13⁸ 14-15⁶ 16⁸ 17⁸⁺¹ 18-24⁸
25⁴ 26² 27⁶ 28-29⁴ 30⁸⁺¹ = 222 ff.
f. 137 blank c.c. 8/85 PF



13496

16²⁸ 34⁴ 4-8⁸ 9⁴ 10-12⁸
= 86 ff., incl. 4 blank
c.c. 7/87 PF

14011

H.P. Kraus: dated collations, inventory numbers, and price-codes (usually erased)

xviii b kl s' marcel
vii c kl s' couphs
vi d kl s' pulce
v e kl s' lomer.
iiii f kl s' sebastien.
iiii g kl s' agnes
xii a kl s' saint dmerut
i b kl s' emmerande
c kl s' basilie
ix d kl s' saint pol
e kl s' policaape
xvi f kl s' iulien
vii g kl s' agnes
a kl s' mefram
xviii b kl s' anne.
vii c kl s' blanchar

ludi
hinc 00
hres
axx 00

The position in the book and on the page or pastedown can be crucial

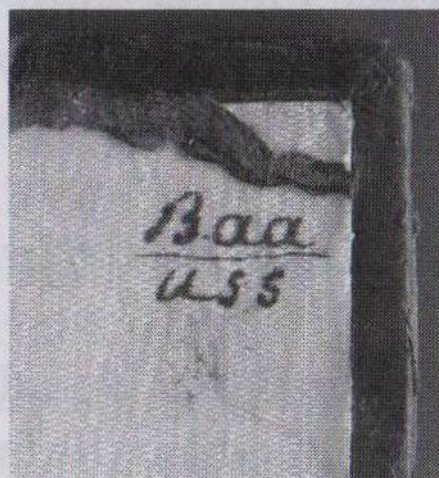
What to record:

- content (a transcription)
- medium (pencil, pen, crayon)
- position in the book, and position on the page
- estimate of date and country
- photos are highly desirable, preferably including a full-page view

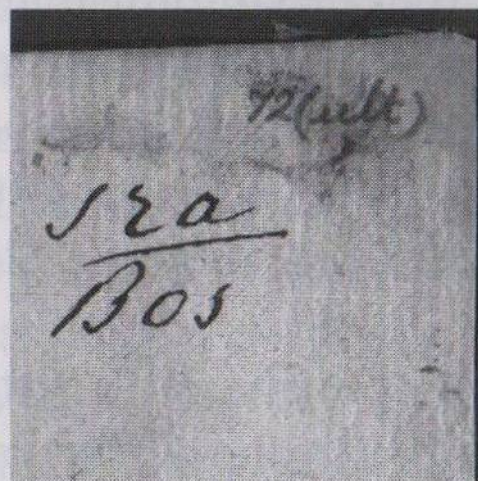
By collecting examples, patterns and identifications emerge:

Adolphe Labitte, 4, rue de Lille, 4e Arr., Paris

Three medieval manuscripts (MSS. Buchanan e. 5, e. 7, and e. 14) appear to have come from a single dealer, since they all share a common form of price-code, inscribed in brown ink on the final flyleaf or lower pastedown; the illuminated printed Book of Hours (Buchanan e.136) bought by Buchanan's uncle in Paris, has a similar inscription at the front, with a note in French recording the number of large and small miniatures.



9. MS. Buchanan e. 7,
top right corner of lower
pastedown, detail



10. MS. Buchanan e. 14,
top right corner of lower
pastedown, detail