

CERL Seminar 2015

LIBRARY HISTORY: WHY, WHAT, HOW?

University of Antwerp, 27 October 2015

Abstracts and biographical notes

1. Flavia Bruni

How to untangle historic libraries: illuminating collections through inventories

Abstract.— After the dissolution of religious orders in Italy in the 1860s, several collections that had belonged to religious houses were merged in those of public libraries. As a result, the provenance of each item is often uncertain. Based on my research on the former Servite cloister of S. Pier Piccolo in Arezzo, this paper will show how inventories can prove helpful to identify books from a specific collection despite the absence of any clear ownership inscription.

The author.— **Flavia Bruni** is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Sapienza University of Rome and a Honorary Research Fellow at the University of St Andrews. She is responsible for the survey of seventeenth-century Italian editions for the Universal Short Title Catalogue of the University of St Andrews. She just edited, with Andrew Pettegree, the volume *Lost Books. Reconstructing the Print World of Pre-Industrial Europe* (forthcoming Brill, 2016) and is currently working on her second monograph on censorship in Counter-Reformation Italy (forthcoming Brill, 2017).

2. Cristina Dondi & Alessandra Panzanelli Fratoni

Researching the origin of Perugia's Public Library (1582/1623) before and after Material Evidence in Incunabula (MEI)

Abstract.— The Biblioteca Augusta of Perugia is one of the earliest public libraries in Italy. Its core foundation is made up of the collection of Prospero Podiani, whose knowledge and interest in the book market led him to create one of the largest collections of 16th-century Italy, including some 300 incunabula. Panzanelli's doctoral research approached documentary evidence pertaining to the collection in order to reconstruct the lively cultural context of the time and space it belonged to. Having transferred the incunabula data into MEI, we can now offer a richer and more complex representation of the development and use of the collection, of the books' survival, loss, and mobility, and of the methodology of the investigation involved.

The authors.— **Cristina Dondi** is the Oakeshott Senior Research Fellow in the Humanities, Lincoln College, University of Oxford, and principal investigator of a 5-year ERC Consolidator Grant on the '15th Century Booktrade: An Evidence-based Assessment and Visualization of the Distribution, Sale, and Reception of Books in the Renaissance' (2014–2019). She is also the Secretary of the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL). **Maria Alessandra Panzanelli Fratoni** is Research Fellow (2014–2018) in the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages of the University of Oxford. She is a member of the ERC-funded 15cBOOKTRADE Project, based at The British Library. Her specialism includes the History of Libraries, Universities, and Law books in the 15th and 16th centuries.

3. Kristian Jensen

Should we write library history?

Abstract.— In this paper I will address some fundamental methodological issues around the writing of histories based on institutions. There evidently is such a thing as library history, but should there be? What are the distinctive characteristics that make it a genre or discipline of its own? These are questions which library history share for instance with the history of universities, or company

histories. Would research involving libraries and their collections be able to engage a wider group of historians by the rethinking its place among disciplines, and its consequent role in interdisciplinary research?

The author. – **Kristian Jensen** is Head of Collections and Curation in the British Library. He has joined the rare books section of the Bodleian Library in 1985 and has been at the British Library since 1999. By academic background he is a classicist and a historian. His work around themes which may be defined as intellectual history has drawn on evidence derived from historical books, from collections and from institutional archives and practices. Among his more recent publications are *Revolution and the Antiquarian Book: Reshaping the Past, 1780–1815* (CUP, 2011); 'Reading Augustine in the Fifteenth Century', in *Cultures of religious reading in the late middle ages*, edited by S. Corbellini (Brepols, 2013), pp.141-72 and 'Printing at Oxford in its European Context 1478–1584', in *A History of Oxford University Press*, vol. 1, edited by I. Gadd (OUP, 2013), pp. 29-49

4. Richard Ovenden

A new history of the Bodleian Library

Abstract. – Examining the historiography of the Bodleian Library in the University of Oxford, and exploring different approaches to a new history of this institution, Richard Ovenden (the 25th librarian) will outline a new approach to the history of the Bodleian.

The author. – **Richard Ovenden** is the 25th Bodley's Librarian, and heads the Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford. He has worked at the National Library of Scotland and at Edinburgh University Library. He became Keeper of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, followed by Associate Director, and latterly (from 2011) Deputy Librarian, at the Bodleian. Richard is author of numerous works on book history including *A Radical's Books: the Library Catalogue of Samuel Jeake of Rye 1623–1690* (1999) and a chapter in the *Cambridge History of Libraries*, volume 1.

5. Yann Sordet

Reconstructing Mazarin's library/libraries in time and space : sources, tools and hypothesis

Abstract. – The author launched a project to virtually reconstruct the two successive libraries of Cardinal Mazarin in Paris. The first one, maybe the largest book collection of the western world at that time (from 40 000 to 56 000 books) being scattered during the Fronde in 1652 ; the second one being developed from 1653, and settled in a long gallery newly built in Mazarin's Palace, of which very few architectural elements remain today. Current digital edition and the analysis of the 17th-century inventories are combined with research on the history of the Palais Mazarin, to better know the development, content, arrangement and transmission of the library.

The author. – **Yann Sordet** is director of the Bibliothèque Mazarine. Previously, he has been head curator of the Rare Books and Manuscripts department of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris. His research focuses on the history of libraries and book collecting, bibliographic practices, incunabula, production and dissemination of the book of spirituality in early modern times (*Imitatio Christi*). He recently became chief editor of the journal 'Histoire et civilisation du livre'.

6. Jolanta Talbierska

Researching the library's historical collections: discover the past and plan the future. The case of Warsaw University Library

Abstract. – A library history is rarely a linear development, and it is always associated with the history of the country. The history of each library consists of all its collections, its people and all the historical

events which determine its fate. In her lecture the author will focus on the study of rare and historical collections, with Warsaw University Library as an example. This library was established in 1817 as part of the Royal University of Warsaw and became a nucleus of intellectual life. It was also acting as an independent public library and regarded as a national library. Since its foundation it has received (and purchased) a lot of the valuable artistic, historical and rare collections, including the famous Print Room of King Stanisław August Poniatowski (prints, drawings, early printed books) and an exceptional collection of nineteenth-century publications covering *Rossica* (publications in Russian), now often preserved in a unique copy. The library holdings were principally directed toward the arts and humanities.

The author will emphasize the value of such research in the context of the knowledge of the history of Poland and its cultural policy and cultural history. She will also point out the methods needed for this research (or for the reconstruction of lost collections), which should combine connoisseurship and evidence with research and critical synthesis. The digital humanities and semantic encoding can become new tools for searching the collected data. The results can be very useful as long as they are used appropriately. By understanding the ideas that inspired the library founders and benefactors, and by exploring the historical collections (the holdings, history, ideas, users etc.), we can continue a tradition which strengthens our position and helps us in the planning of future tasks according to the needs of the modern user. Discovering the history of the library by its collections could help us to understand the users' needs and to make better use of it.

The author. – Professor **Jolanta Talbierska** PhD is an art historian (MA and PhD) and certified librarian. She is the director of the University of Warsaw Library and Keeper of the Print Room. Her publications and lectures are about the history of European printmaking and drawing, collections of prints and drawings, book illustration, methodology and methods of graphic art, early modern iconography, and the ancient tradition in art.

7. Charles van den Heuvel

The research librarian between computer agents and the crowd: reconstructing and creating past and future collections

Abstract. – The Internet Archive has been compared to older initiatives to bring the knowledge of world together such as the Library of Alexandria and the Mundaneum. The latter example is of particular interest since it proposed the combination of contemporary information technologies with the domain expertise of researchers to produce knowledge. This paper discusses the question how librarians and archivists can collaborate with digital humanities scholars using a combination of new technologies such as computer agents and web archiving with crowdsourcing to reconstruct past and to create future collections for research.

The author. – **Charles van den Heuvel** is Head Research of History of Science at the Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. He holds the chair on *Digital Methods and Historical Disciplines (in particular the History of Scholarship and Information Sciences)* at the University of Amsterdam.

8. Dirk Van Hulle

Digital Library History: The Virtual Bookcases of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett

Abstract. – This paper investigates to what extent it is possible, not only to digitize a writer's extant library, but also to reconstruct her or his virtual library. The central question is whether digitizing a writer's library isn't in fact a form of digitizing a library history, and whether this implies the possibility of interdisciplinary collaboration between library history and genetic criticism.

The author. – **Dirk Van Hulle** is Professor of English Literature, director of the Centre for Manuscript Genetics at the University of Antwerp and editor of the new *Cambridge Companion to Samuel Beckett*

(2015). With Mark Nixon, he is co-editor of the *Beckett Digital Manuscript Project* (www.beckettarchive.org) and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Beckett Studies*. His publications include *Textual Awareness* (2004), *Samuel Beckett's Library* (with Mark Nixon, 2013) and *Modern Manuscripts: The Extended Mind and Creative Undoing* (2014).

9. Dirk Van Miert

Thinking classified: the 18th-century integration of librarianship and the historiography of learning

Abstract.— In the beginning of the 18th century a new historical consciousness of the value of recent traditions of learning, the spectacular growth in book production, and new ideals of learned sociability converged in stimulating the rise of a new historiographical genre: the history of learning or *historia literaria*. A host of encyclopedic books aimed at giving an overview of relevant literature to students who felt overwhelmed by the overload of information. Most of these handbooks provided a combination of knowledge classification, biography, bibliography and anecdotes about the Republic of Letters. Such books were also used by librarians searching for knowledge systems which would fit the expectations of scholars. This is a story about how librarians and historians strove to be on one page in serving the academic community. I will conceive of *historia literaria* in terms of a non-subtractable, more or less open access 'knowledge common'. I hope to show that library history should be firmly integrated into the history of ideas, and that this type of intellectual history can in turn benefit from the study of institutions.

The author.— **Dirk van Miert** (University of Utrecht) specialises in the history of early-modern knowledge in general and of the Republic of Letters in particular. He is the author of a work on the Amsterdam *Athenaeum Illustre* (2009); with Paul Botley, he edited Joseph Scaliger's correspondence (2012); and he is the editor of several volumes at the crossroads of natural science and the humanities. A study on biblical philology will follow in 2016. Currently, he researches the knowledge classifications of German idealism.

10. Bettina Wagner

Opening doors into the past. The library of the Nuremberg humanist Hartmann Schedel (1440-1514) and the modern world

Abstract.— The library of the Nuremberg humanist Hartmann Schedel, well-known for his role in the production of the 'Nuremberg Chronicle' of 1493, is one of the very few private book collections of the 15th century to survive in unusual completeness. His manuscripts and the largest part of his printed books are preserved in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek at Munich today, and two early inventories make it possible to analyze the composition of the library and to trace scattered items. The paper will discuss the steps required to enhance the visibility of Schedel's collection across the traditional division by media type and period, and to stimulate scholarly research in a variety of disciplines (e.g. history of medicine, reception of humanism) through digitization and in-depth cataloguing. Recent outreach activities will also be outlined, which were undertaken on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Schedel's death in order to enable a modern non-specialist audience to gain insights into the education and career of a late mediaeval German doctor, set against the backdrop of 15th-century book production and distribution.

The author.— **Bettina Wagner** is currently head of the section *Handschriftenschießungszentrum* and curator of incunabula in the Department for Manuscripts and Early Printed Books of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München. In recent years, she has been responsible for a range of externally-funded cataloguing and digitization projects. She has also been involved in the organization of exhibitions and conferences on the history of the book and libraries, particularly in the 15th century.