

Virtual Visits to Lost Libraries: reconstruction of and access to dispersed collections

Friday, 5 November 2010, Kongelige Biblioteket, Copenhagen

Seminar organised by CERL and LIBER's Steering Committee for
Heritage Collections and Preservation



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Bibliotheca Palatina: a scattered library reconstructed

The former Heidelbergian Bibliotheca Palatina is scattered in many libraries in Europe. The printed holdings in Rome and Italy are published as microfiche edition (1995). The German manuscripts in Heidelberg are digitised (2010). Additional projects for the reconstruction and the digitisation of the library are in progress. The paper will give an overview about the reconstruction as well as the digitisation in the past and the future.



Jutta Weber (Staatsbibliothek, Berlin) and Graham Jefcoate (Radboud University, Nijmegen)

Reconnecting the Forster legacy: the virtual construction – and reconstruction – of a key Enlightenment collection

Introduction

Johann Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) and his son Georg (George) Forster (1754-1794) are major figures in the European Enlightenment, their reputation being largely based on their participation as scientists in James Cook's second navigation of the globe on the Resolution, 1772-1775. During the voyage, the Forsters collected a great quantity of anthropological objects and natural history specimens. In addition, Georg Forster created original natural history art works. Both during and after the voyage, each Forster wrote descriptions of what he had seen and experienced, some of which contain the first known scientific accounts of aspects of Pacific cultures and the region's flora and fauna. Surviving Forster collections therefore encompass not only museum objects and specimens but also drawings and paintings, autograph letters and manuscript papers, printed books and other items.

The challenge

This material is widely scattered across holding institutions (libraries, museums, archives, historic houses) in Britain, Germany, France, Russia, other European countries, Australia, the United States and elsewhere overseas. Its intrinsic and research importance is beyond question, but at the present time it is often difficult to locate, let alone to search or use. Previous work has focused on identifying and describing aspects of the collections (for example, botanical materials). But much material has never been located nor adequately described. No comprehensive survey has so far been attempted.

Towards a solution

Modern information technology (networking and digitisation) now makes a 'virtual joining up' of the Forsters' collections possible. Under the auspices of the Georg Forster Gesellschaft (George Forster Society), a workshop was held in Kassel, Germany, in May 2009 to discuss the wide dispersal of material created by or collected by the workshop saw the creation of a small, informal work group to take the matter forward on behalf of the Society. It was decided that as a first step we should try to collect some preliminary information on Forster collections and materials in order to get some idea of their distribution, scope, level of documentation and accessibility. An international survey is currently in progress. The results of this survey should provide the basis for a further step: the virtual connection of related material long since dispersed across geographical, linguistic, institutional and disciplinary boundaries. The ultimate aim is to enable access for scholars and the general public to the full range of Forster material world-wide through a single point.

Proposal

In this paper, Graham Jefcoate and Jutta Weber, members of the informal working group working with the University of Kassel, will set out the aims and objectives of the project and describe its potential for research.



István Monok (formerly National Széchényi Library, Budapest)

Scholar's libraries in Hungary in the 16th and 17th centuries: reconstructions based on research of owners' marks)

By studying the owners of surviving sixteenth and seventeenth centuries booklists and the names in the hand written notes in old book collections we can find several interesting things. First of all, the two lists of names form a complementary set that is we know of very few people who owned books

where both the book lists and the books survived. Another important feature of the two lists is that there is hardly anyone on these lists whose written work we know of. Furthermore, there is hardly anyone on these lists who is known to have been enrolled in a secondary school or university (and these people must have been able to read and must have used books). This means that we can reconstruct the reading culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries intelligentsia in the Hungarian Kingdom only from other sources, through the quotes and the mentality of their writings. This statement is true only on a general level because some of the books of some of the scholars both in Hungary and in Transylvania in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were indeed found, even conclusions can be drawn when one studies these books concerning the intelligentsia of this period.

The notes in the surviving books reveal another general phenomenon. In the Central European region and in Hungary it was very common that the same book belonged to the libraries of several families or institutions due to the difficulties in acquiring books and the shortage of books. As a result, the book contains the names of several of its owners and the mark “et amicorum” is also common. This latter refers to the fact that books were often used by several people.

The history of the scholar libraries in Hungary of the sixteenth century is summed up in the literature rather briefly. Three big collections are mentioned although two of them were held only partly in Hungary: Hans Dernschwam (1494–1568), János Zsámboky’s (1531–1584), András Dudith (1533–1589).

One could list more examples of cases where the collection of a scholarly philologist or historian (the library of Adrian Wolphard in Cluj, the collection of János Baranyai Decsi in Marosvásárhely, the one of István Szamosközy in Gyulafehérvár, etc.) cannot be reconstructed from a contemporary booklist but through possessor marks and notes. The best example in Hungary to illustrate the usefulness of possessor marks of owners in old books is the case of the historian Miklós Istvánffy’s.



Monique Hulvey (Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon)

From Rome to Lyon: Reconstructing the libraries of two Renaissance Hebraists

The study of oriental languages in the sixteenth century has provided an unexpected path for the reconstruction of humanistic libraries in Lyon. First gathered in Italy and brought to Lyon by a Christian scholar as part as his

own library, several classics of Hebrew and Greek supplied the necessary evidence which triggered the rediscovery of collections dispersed around the stacks of the Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon. Through their reconstructed provenance, appears a wealth of connections from Florence to the cosmopolitan circles of humanists in Rome prior to the sack of the city in 1527. Reassembled step by step from annotations and marks of exchanges, they also reveal the distinct figures which on several occasions played a major social and religious role in Lyon between Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

The paper intends to describe the method and progress of this reconstitution and how small collections can reveal a wider social and political picture.



Johan Oosterman (Radboud University, Nijmegen)

Archaeology of the book collection: Living with books in the nunnery of Soeterbeeck

The Soeterbeeck Collection is unique in its make-up, and in the way it reflects a history of living with books. Thus it demands a different way of looking at medieval collections and provokes new questions and approaches that will deliver new insights into the history of book collections as such. The concept of ‘archaeology of the collection’ may extend our understanding not only of collections as a whole, but can also deliver new insights in the multi-layered character of its parts: the books and fragments which fill up our modern libraries.

The collection

The Soeterbeeck Collection consists of more than 50 medieval manuscripts, circa 500 printed books and an impressive number of fragments – for the main part preserved as binding material in the printed books.

Soeterbeeck, as a nunnery, was founded in 1443 in the vicinity of Eindhoven. It moved several times until it was established in Deursen in the 18th century. There it lasted until it was closed down in 1997. The Radboud University Nijmegen acquired the buildings and collections, and thus became owner of a extended and very important library. Only a small number of manuscripts is kept in other libraries (The Hague, Tilburg, Brussels). During more than five centuries the nunnery acquired, produced and disposed of books. And all these years the nuns used the books intensively: they made inscriptions, and they bound and rebound books with the remains of discarded manuscripts. They altered liturgical texts in order to adjust them to new customs, because they wanted the means to build up a new collection. And, by doing so, a collection which consisted of books from the Middle Ages and later shows

many traces of the life with books of at least 25 generations of devout women. It is a unique collection because of its scope and coherence and it delivers us an exceptional view at the dynamics of a collection over a long time span.

The approach

To do justice to the Soeterbeeck collection and the many people who lived with these books, a profound investigation of all the books in every detail, and all the inscriptions is required. Point of departure has to be the assumption that the collection is the result of a process of constant change which resulted in books that bear the traces of alterations, additions and different forms of deliberate and unintended loss. If one considers the books apart, this will give a wrong impression because of the many interrelated inscriptions, alterations and remakings which can be observed. Not the separate artefacts but the collection as a whole, has to be subject of study. In order to handle this huge research object we propose a new approach: the archaeology of the collection. Not the single books and the individual inscriptions, but the successive layers of acquisition, loss and traces of use are subject of research. Meticulous description and interpretation, systematic processing of the facts in a database and analysis of the results by established methods from historical and literary studies delivers insight in the rich and assiduous culture of devout and literate women.

Innovation

The approach of a book collection as an archaeological site is inspired by the concept of the archaeology of the book, introduced by Delaisse in 1967. Delaisse, because of his untimely death, never came up with a detailed methodology and never had the aim to extend his approach to a collection of books. In aiming to widen the scope and work out the method in detail, this project will be innovative in the research of book collections. The radical decision to include all books, whether they are written or printed, and whether they are medieval or belong to the recent, twentieth century acquisitions, is not unprecedented but is, in respect to a collection of this scale and taking into account the detailed research, indeed very innovative.



Matthew Driscoll (Arnarnagnæan Collection of Old Norse Manuscripts, Copenhagen)

<http://handrit.is/> and the virtual reunification of Árni Magnússon's collection of Icelandic manuscripts

This is the most important collection of O.N. mss. in the world. After more than 100 years of strife and discussions, it was divided and two in the 20th

century and one half moved to Iceland, the other remaining in Copenhagen, at the Arnarnagnæan Institute of the University. A joint catalogue (on the web) is now recreating virtually the collection of Árni Magnússon.



Marina Venier (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Rome)

The Monastic libraries in Rome, from the lists of the religious orders for the Sacred Congregation of the Index to their confiscation in 1873: the reconstruction of the Eborense library from the convent of Santa Maria in Aracoeli of the Minor Observant Friars

The RICCI project is taking care of the transcription of the lists contained in the Vatican Codes 11266-11326, datable up to 1603. After the publication of Clement the VIII's Index of Prohibited Books in 1596, the Sacred Congregation of the Index asked for the lists of approximately thirty one religious orders, in order to check which books were held in their libraries and by the monks themselves. In the manuscript Vaticanus Latinus 11314, c. 1r-8v, is written the list, datable to the year 1600, of "all those books that are in the common library of the convent of Santa Maria de Aracoeli in Rome of the Minor Observant Friars of Saint Francis".

In 1873, after the creation of the Kingdom of Italy and of Rome as its new capital, a law of the new State decreed the entire confiscation of the properties of all the religious orders (libraries, archives, buildings, art collections).

By 1874, the libraries of sixty nine monasteries placed in Rome and its province, consisting in about 650,000 books, were moved first to the Dominican convent of S. Maria sopra Minerva and afterwards to the nearby Collegio Romano. About 380,000 books were reallocated in other libraries (Casanatense, Angelica and Vallicelliana), whereas 277,674 books remained in the Collegio Romano, where they formed the first nucleus of the newly born National Library.

Printed books were indistinctly mixed together and format classification was then adopted in the rearrangement of books in the National Library stacks. Reference to the original convent was preserved exclusively on the spine of manuscripts.

In 1734, José Maria Fonseca da Evora, General of the Minorites and Minister Plenipotentiary of the King of Portugal by the Holy See, enlarged and renewed the library of the Minor Observant Friars in S. Maria in Aracoeli, an initiative that led, more than a century later, in 1874, to a succession dispute among Italy and Portugal, which claimed to the legitimate heir-at-law of Fonseca.

Such judicial controversy ended nine years later, in 1883, when the collection (19,906 volumes) was finally added to the National Library. According to the deal agreed between the Italian and Portuguese governments, the Eborensis library was to be kept as a whole and the National Library would have had to preserve such unity, with the only permission of adjusting references to the new shelf marks. The Aracoelitana Library appears therefore to be the only complete and highly identifiable monastic library now kept in the National Library.

However, the history of this library, one of the main monastic libraries of the XV up to the XVIII century, is not so easy to reconstruct and it is strongly bounded to those of other important libraries: a proposal for a critical reconstruction of this book collection shall then be the aim of my presentation.



Isabelle de Conihout (Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris)

Identifying libraries and patrons of bookbindings by numbers

From several study cases in French libraries (Laubespine XVIth, Peiresc, Trichet du Fresne and cardinal Mazarin XVIIth), I would like to show how the attention paid to numeric indications (“id est” old inventory numbers or shelf marks) found on the end-leaves of volumes without any mark of ownership may bring to the rediscovery of huge collections.

The other point is how to describe such figures, often neglected, in catalogue descriptions and databases, so that they can be useful.



Karen Skovgaard-Petersen and Ivan Boserup (Kongelige Biblioteket, Copenhagen)

Towards a Reconstruction of the Ducal Library of Gottorp Castle (c. 1575-1713)

The rich library of the dukes of Schleswig-Holstein became booty of war of the Danish Crown in 1713. Besides a rich collection of manuscripts, ca. 10,000 printed volumes were shipped to Copenhagen. Over the following years, many duplicates were sold or given to other Danish libraries of which some subsequently burned down, and the remaining printed books were included in the collections of the Royal Library without being provenance-marked in any way, as was usual at that time. The Gottorp library, dispersed within The Royal Library’s collections of otherwise mostly Danish provenance,

has ever since to a high degree accounted for the substantial amount of European rare books in the Royal Library, but as ex-library of high renown in the 17th century it seems not yet to have received the attention it deserves. Many Gottorp volumes have been identified earlier through obvious provenance-marks (e.g. the ducal super-exlibris), but thousands of other less conspicuous items have not. By working systematically with the remaining parts of the contemporary Gottorp catalogues, a number of supplementary identification marks have been discovered, allowing, it seems, to identify also a number of sub-collections, and, in a longer perspective, to partly reconstruct virtually the library as it stood on the shelves at its apogee.