The Invention of Rare Books

When does a book that is merely old become a rarity and an object of desire? David McKitterick examines, for the first time, the development of the idea of rare books, and why they matter. Studying examples from across Europe, he explores how this idea took shape in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and how collectors, the book trade and libraries gradually came together to identify canons that often remain the same today. In a world that many people found to be over-supplied with books, the invention of rare books was a process of selection. As books are one of the principal means of memory, this process also created particular kinds of remembering. Taking a European perspective, McKitterick looks at these interests as they developed from being matters of largely private concern and curiosity, to the larger public and national responsibilities of the first half of the nineteenth century.

David McKitterick, FBA, was for many years Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Honorary Professor of Historical Bibliography at Cambridge. His previous publications include the three volume A History of Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1992–2004), Cambridge University Library: A History, Volume 2: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (Cambridge, 1986), Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830 (Cambridge, 2003), and most recently Old Books, New Technologies (Cambridge, 2013). Professor McKitterick is one of the general editors of the Cambridge History of the Book in Britain.
The Invention of Rare Books
Private Interest and Public Memory, 1600–1840

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Acknowledgements

A version of part of this book was delivered as the Panizzi Lectures at the British Library in 2015. I am grateful to the electors for the opportunity to present this subject to my audiences there, and to others over the last few years in Australia, Belgium, Eire, France, Italy, the Netherlands and New Zealand, for helping me further my thoughts. Among individuals, I especially appreciate the help and conversations, often shared unwittingly, given by Astrid Balsem, Nicolas Barker, Bill Bell, Katherine Birkwood, Elizabethanne Boran, André Bouwman, Chris Coppens, Rudolf Dekker, Pierre Delsaerdt, Christine Ferdinand, Mirjam Foot, Meg Ford, John Freeman, the late David Hall, Hugh Hardinge, Neil Harris, Jonathan Harrison, Eric Holzenberg, Arnold Hunt, Kristian Jensen, Donald Kerr, Wallace Kirsop, the Kok family, Giles Mandelbrote, Kathryn McKee, Chris Michaelides, James Mosley, Raphaële Mouren, Paul Needham, Angela Nuovo, Renato Pasta, David Pearson, Nicholas Pickwoad, Nicholas Poole-Wilson, Ed Potten, Martine Poulaïn, Paul Quarrie, James Raven, Catherine Reid, Nicholas Rogers, Shef Rogers, Frank Rutten, Roger Stoddard, G.Thomas Tanselle, Garrelt Verhoven and Ian Willison. In accepting that they were reading an unfinished version, the anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press were of particularly timely help. As usual, I am indebted day by day to the staff of Cambridge University Library, and to my colleagues in Trinity College, Cambridge. At the University Press, Linda Bree has – as so many times before – been a model of imaginative encouragement and constant support.

All the time in the background have been two inspiring friends with whom it is sadly no longer possible to discuss the subject of this book. A.N.L. Munby, known to almost everyone as Tim, died in 1974, and I have turned repeatedly to his collection of catalogues and other bibliographical material in Cambridge University Library. Anthony Hobson died more recently, in 2014, and it is partly to him that this book owes much of its deliberately international focus.

Most of all, my wife Rosamond has once again listened, suggested and read her way through various drafts of the book, in ways for which I can only be profoundly thankful.
Abbreviations


BnF      Bibliothèque nationale de France

Bod-Inc      Alan Coates and others, A catalogue of books printed in the fifteenth century now in the Bodleian Library. 6 vols (Oxford, 2005)

Duff      E.G.Duff, Printing in England in the fifteenth century: E. Gordon Duf’s bibliography, with supplementary descriptions, chronologies and a census of copies, by Lotte Hellinga (Bibliographical Soc., 2009)

EEBO      Early English Books Online: https://eebo.chadwyck.com

ECCO      Eighteenth Century Collections Online

ESTC      English short-title catalogue: www.estc.bl.uk

FRS      Fellow of the Royal Society

ISTC      Incunabula short-title catalogue: www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc

JPHS      Journal of the Printing Historical Society

NWO      Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research


ODNB      Oxford dictionary of national biography

PBSA      Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America

Pforzheimer      Carl H. Pforzheimer Library of English literature, 1475–1700. 3 vols (New York, 1940)

RLUK      Research Libraries UK

SB      Studies in Bibliography

Abbreviations

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<tbody>
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<td>STCN</td>
<td>Short-title catalogue Netherlands</td>
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<td>STCV</td>
<td>Short-title catalogue Vlaanderen</td>
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<td>TCBS</td>
<td>Transactions of Cambridge Bibliographical Society</td>
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<td>USTC</td>
<td>Universal short-title catalogue</td>
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