

## 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.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-42832-3 — The Invention of Rare Books  
David McKitterick  
Frontmatter  
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# The Invention of Rare Books

Private Interest and Public Memory, 1600–1840

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DAVID MCKITTERICK  
University of Cambridge



## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108428323](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108428323)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108584265

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First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: McKitterick, David, author.

Title: The invention of rare books : private interest and public memory, 1600–1840 / David McKitterick.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018003779 | ISBN 9781108428323 (hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: Rare books – Europe – History. | Rare books – Europe – Bibliography – Methodology – History. | Book collecting – Europe – History. | Book collectors – Europe – History. | Libraries – Europe – History. |

Book industries and trade – Europe – History – 17th century. |

Book industries and trade – Europe – History – 18th century. |

Book industries and trade – Europe – History – 19th century.

Classification: LCC Z1029.M35 2018 | DDC 090.94–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018003779>

ISBN 978-1-108-42832-3 Hardback

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Figs. 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17 and 18 are by permission of the Master and Fellows, Trinity College, Cambridge. Fig.1 is by permission of the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum. Others are from a private collection.



## 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 Delsaerd, 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 Poulain, 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.

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## Abbreviations

Adams	H.M.Adams, <i>Catalogue of books printed on the continent of Europe, 1501–1600, in Cambridge libraries</i> 2 vols (Cambridge, 1967)
BMC	<i>Catalogue of books printed in the XVth century now in the British Museum (Library)</i> . 13 parts, some reprinted with annotations (London and 'tGoy-Houten, 1963–2007)
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
Bod-Inc	Alan Coates and others, <i>A catalogue of books printed in the fifteenth century now in the Bodleian Library</i> . 6 vols (Oxford, 2005)
Duff	E.G.Duff, <i>Printing in England in the fifteenth century: E. Gordon Duff's bibliography, with supplementary descriptions, chronologies and a census of copies</i> , by Lotte Hellinga (Bibliographical Soc., 2009)
EEBO	<i>Early English Books Online</i> : <a href="https://eebo.chadwyck.com">https://eebo.chadwyck.com</a>
ECCO	<i>Eighteenth Century Collections Online</i>
ESTC	<i>English short-title catalogue</i> : <a href="http://www.estc.bl.uk">www.estc.bl.uk</a>
FRS	Fellow of the Royal Society
ISTC	<i>Incunabula short-title catalogue</i> : <a href="http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc">www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc</a>
JPHS	<i>Journal of the Printing Historical Society</i>
NWO	Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
Oates	J.C.T.Oates, <i>A catalogue of the fifteenth-century printed books in the University Library, Cambridge</i> (Cambridge, 1954)
ODNB	<i>Oxford dictionary of national biography</i>
PBSA	<i>Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America</i>
Pforzheimer	<i>Carl H. Pforzheimer Library of English literature, 1475–1700</i> . 3 vols (New York, 1940)
RLUK	Research Libraries UK
SB	<i>Studies in Bibliography</i>
STC	A.W.Pollard and G.R.Redgrave, <i>A short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, &amp; Ireland, and of English books printed abroad, 1475–1640</i> . 2nd edn, revised by William A.Jackson, F.S.Ferguson and Katharine F.Pantzer, with a chronological index by Philip R.Rider. 3 vols (Bibliographical Soc., 1975–91)

STCN	<i>Short-title catalogue Netherlands</i>
STCV	<i>Short-title catalogue Vlaanderen</i>
TCBS	<i>Transactions of Cambridge Bibliographical Society</i>
USTC	<i>Universal short-title catalogue</i>
VD 16	<i>Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts</i>
VD 17	<i>Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts</i>