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The sheaf catalogs of George John Spencer

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THE SHEAF CATALOGS OF GEORGE JOHN SPENCER

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by

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THE SHEAF CATALOGS OF GEORGE JOHN SPENCER

by
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ABSTRACT

THE SHEAF CATALOGS OF GEORGE JOHN SPENCER

By Larissa C. Brookes

This thesis discusses two library catalogs once owned by George John, the second

Earl Spencer (1758-1834). A consummate bibliophile and book collector, Spencer

amassed an unparalleled private library of first editions, incunables, and other coveted

books. Spencer used several manuscript (*i.e.* handwritten) catalogs to access and manage

his extensive libraries. One of these catalogs was in sheaf format, a compact physical

form that foreshadows the more well-known card catalog format. Spencer's sheaf

catalog is now in the collection of the Grolier Club in New York. He owned a second

nearly identical sheaf catalog, now at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

While this thesis examines both sheaf catalogs, it focuses on the catalog now held by the

Grolier Club.

As this thesis explains, Spencer's sheaf catalog carries a wealth of information

regarding the evolution of library catalogs. Examining cataloging history demonstrates

that Spencer's sheaf catalog occupies a unique position; it may be the first compact

catalog used for a private library. The sheaf catalog also reveals a hidden side of

Spencer, the celebrated book collector. Spencer is best known for applying his intellect

and fortune to finding and buying books; however, his sheaf catalog demonstrates that

Spencer also devoted himself to ensuring that he and other readers could find the books

and information they sought in his vast library.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Spencer's Sheaf Catalogs

One of the many treasures owned by the Grolier Club, the oldest and largest U.S. bibliophile society, is an elegant four-drawer mahogany chest. This piece at first appears to be a handsome, antique dresser, but in fact it is a unique artifact: it contains one of the earliest known sheaf catalogs created for a private library. Indeed, it is one of the first compact catalogs – in card, sheaf, or slip format – used in any library, institutional or private.

This catalog and its chest were made for George John, the second Earl Spencer, a book collector and bibliophile who amassed an unparalleled private library of first editions of the Bible, Latin and Greek classics, European literature and history, and other works, hundreds of them from the incunable period.[1] Spencer typified the wealthy, focused, and eager book collectors who helped propel the wave of bibliomania that occurred during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[2] Spencer's collection was so extraordinary that Augustin Renouard, the accomplished nineteenth-century

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1. This period begins in the mid-1450s and ends in 1500. Incunables (or incunabula) are books printed before 1501.

2. Clare S. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Nineteenth-Century British Book-Collectors and Bibliographers*, ed. William Baker and Kenneth Womack, Vol. 184 (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1997), 413.

bibliographer, described Spencer's collection as "the most beautiful and richest private library in Europe."[3]

Today, almost all of Spencer's books are held by the John Rylands University Library of Manchester (the Rylands). Enriqueta Rylands, the widow of wealthy Manchester industrialist John Rylands, bought virtually all of Spencer's books from the fifth Earl Spencer, John Poyntz Spencer, in 1892. A lengthy agricultural depression had forced the fifth Earl Spencer to choose between selling the family paintings or the library; he reluctantly chose to sell the books. During this period, Mrs. Rylands was buying books, mainly theological, to equip a public library she intended to build to honor her late husband; however, none of her previous purchases hinted she would make such a monumental and historical acquisition. By buying the legendary Althorp collection, Ms. Rylands inadvertently ensured that newspaper and magazine readers around the world would know about the John Rylands Memorial Library and its soon-to-be unparalleled collection.

As splendid as Spencer's library was, this thesis will not focus on the Earl's affluence, celebrated collection, or spending habits. Many of the books he acquired have such history and glamour that they overshadow Spencer's interest and skill in managing his collection. Moreover, other authors during the nineteenth century and more recently have written about Spencer's book collecting activities and his book collection.

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3. William Y. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1902), 311.

Instead, this thesis will discuss the valuable contributions Spencer and his librarians have made to library science. Contrary to Spencer's reputation – he was both praised and castigated as a single-mindedly acquisitive, excessively privileged bibliophile – Spencer spent most of his book-related time reading and organizing his collection. Even though he spent a great deal of time finding and buying books, Spencer also devoted much of his life to ensuring that other readers (and not solely himself) could find the books and information they sought in his vast library.

The library catalog now in the Grolier Club's collection shows that Spencer managed his libraries[4] with the attention and zeal he applied to book collecting. His sheaf catalog was nearly unique in the world of private library catalogs, sharing more characteristics with large institutional catalogs than with the bibliographic records kept by contemporaneous book collectors.

Spencer's sheaf catalog was only "nearly" unique because he owned a second sheaf catalog. Because he had two extensive libraries, it is fitting that he had two sheaf catalogs. The second sheaf catalog is held by the Rylands; Mrs. Rylands acquired it when she bought the Spencer collection. Both the Rylands and Grolier sheaf catalogs are physically similar and contain nearly duplicate bibliographical records, but they are not identical.

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4. Spencer kept certain books at Spencer House, the mansion his father built in London; most of the rest of the books were kept at Althorp, the Spencer ancestral estate in Northamptonshire. He also kept some books at the Spencer residences in Wimbledon and Ryde, on the Isle of Wight.

Why did Spencer have two nearly identical catalogs? Very likely he kept one catalog in each of his two principal residences, Althorp and Spencer House. While some have speculated that the Rylands catalog was kept at Althorp and the Grolier catalog at Spencer House (as well as the reverse), no definitive proof has emerged about their locations during Spencer's lifetime. Indeed, very little evidence exists about either catalog. Chapter Four discusses theories regarding their locations, purposes, and relationship to each other; this chapter also presents the results of extensive on-site research into both the Grolier and Rylands catalogs.

What Is a Sheaf Catalog?

One of the remarkable qualities of Spencer's catalog is its form; the sheaf catalog was uncommon for any library in the early 1800s, academic, institutional, or private. A sheaf catalog comprises loose slips of paper that are bound by mechanical means into volumes or "sheaves."[5] In the early 1800s, most academic libraries in Britain, Ireland, and the United States used either printed catalogs, comprehensive bibliographic lists that were typeset and bound in book form; or manuscript catalogs, loose or bound compilations that were handwritten (hence the term "manuscript").[6] Both the printed and manuscript catalog forms typically use large sheets of paper rather than the smaller slips used for the sheaf catalog or small, thick cards used in the card catalog.

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5. Douglas Stewart, *The Sheaf Catalogue: A Practical Handbook on the Compilation of Manuscript Catalogues for Public and Private Libraries* (London: Libraco, 1909), 129.

6. Because it is handwritten, the Spencer sheaf catalog has also been described as a manuscript catalog.

The sheaf catalog resembles the card catalog in compactness and size of each record but differs in that its slips are bound into volumes, unlike the card catalog, which typically has thicker paper cards that are filed in narrow drawers. Even though Spencer's catalog was created and maintained, most likely, in the late 1700s to early 1800s, the sheaf catalog did not become popular in Britain and Ireland until the late 1800s and early 1900s. During this latter period, British and Irish librarians debated the advantages of the sheaf versus the card catalog, while U.S. libraries favored the card catalog.

The physical form of Spencer's catalog is only one of its intriguing features. His catalog also demonstrates that Spencer, one of the world's most celebrated bibliophiles, was more than a book collector; he was also avidly interested in accessing the information stored in his vast collection. For example, his bibliographic records – the slips bound together to form sheaves – regarding compilations, encyclopedias, independents,[7] and similar works are often several pages long, as they contain details for each title. Countless other slips record subject and author cross-references. A reader could look up a subject, such as King Arthur or the history of Scotland, or author, such as Aristotle or Boccaccio, to find relevant books in Spencer's collection throughout all his libraries.

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7. "Independents" are books or pamphlets printed separately but bound together. Matt Roberts and Don Etherington, *Bookbinding and the Conservation of Books: A Dictionary of Descriptive Terminology* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1982), 296, http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/don/don.html (accessed July 20, 2008).

Purpose of This Thesis

Why is Spencer's catalog worthy of study? Examining the card catalog's rivals – such as Spencer's sheaf catalog – will help deepen our understanding of early cataloging efforts and thus our knowledge of library history. The sheaf catalog is only one of the several physical forms that library catalogs have taken. These varied forms manifest the difficult task of creating a system that must fulfill diverse purposes: allowing scholarly or recreational searching, providing an item's physical location, and helping manage a library's collection.

Given the extensive resources devoted to documenting the Internet and World Wide Web, it is surprising how little consideration the library profession pays to cataloging artifacts.[8] How physical catalogs, such as the sheaf and card formats, evolved is a question that most library scholarship ignores; instead, more recent technological advances receive most of the attention. Yet, before the online public access catalog became standard, the card catalog and its close relative, the sheaf catalog, were the vanguard.

By presenting the Grolier sheaf catalog's first in-depth examination, this thesis seeks to generate greater awareness of Spencer's remarkable catalogs. In the many scholarly treatments of Spencer's book collection and his collecting activities, his catalogs have received tangential attention, if any at all. Focusing on the Grolier sheaf

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8. For example, see Richard J. Cox, Jane Greenberg, and Cynthia Porter, "Access Denied: The Discarding of Library History," *American Libraries* 29, no. 4 (April 1998): 57-61.

catalog may place this item more prominently in library history, thereby enriching library and information science scholarship. This thesis will describe how to achieve these goals.

Literature Review

Second Earl Spencer

As a significant historical figure, George John Spencer has been the subject of many encyclopedia entries, bibliographic studies, and books. Most of these sources reiterate certain aspects of Spencer's history – his financially fortuitous purchase of Count Reviczky's collection, which started his avocation as a serious book collector; the suspenseful auction of the Duke of Roxburghe's collection; and Spencer's purchase of a rare 1471 edition of Boccaccio's *Il decamerone,* printed by Christopher Valdarfer (referred to as "the Valdarfer Boccaccio" by nineteenth-century writers and bibliophiles). Spencer's position in book collecting history is unquestioned and admired; Spencer is such an archetype that his image appears as the frontispiece to William Y. Fletcher's *English Book Collectors.*[9]

However similar their stories may be, most sources provide a unique perspective of the Earl. For example, Malcolm Lester authored an informative and complimentary entry on Spencer in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*[10] Clare Simmons provided a similarly instructive biographical sketch of Spencer, though her article

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9. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors.*

10. Malcolm Lester, "Spencer, George John, Second Earl Spencer (1758-1834)," in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26125 (accessed May 7, 2008).

includes unflattering details of Spencer's service as First Lord of the (British) Admiralty.[11]

Seymour de Ricci devoted a chapter of *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts* to Spencer and his fellow bibliophile, the Duke of Roxburghe.[12] De Ricci described Spencer's book collecting activities and noted, possibly for the first time in print, Spencer's accession-numbering system. William Fletcher provided a brief but laudatory survey of Spencer's professional and bibliographic successes in *English Book Collectors*.[13]

Edward Edwards, the radical Manchester librarian who helped pioneer the public library in Great Britain, included his visit to the Althorp library in *Libraries and Founders of Libraries*.[14] Edwards's lengthy passage on this visit provides a rare description of one of Spencer's sheaf catalogs, though he does not describe the chest sufficiently for one to determine which catalog Edwards examined. Edwards's brief description is the only study of Spencer's sheaf catalog ever published, and it even includes an illustration of a mock-catalog slip.

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11. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 413-18.

12. Seymour de Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts (1530-1930) and Their Marks of Ownership* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1930). "Roxburghe" is pronounced "ROX-bruh."

13. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors*.

14. Edward Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries* (London: Trübner, 1864).

More recently, Peter H. Reid published an article offering a historical view of the Spencer family's book-collecting activities.[15] While the article concentrates on George John Spencer, it also discusses another bibliophile branch of the Spencer family as well as the second Earl's famous purchases. Like several other writers, Reid repeats the mistaken notion that Thomas Frognall Dibdin served as the Earl's librarian.[16] Dibdin received both praise and disdain for his work as a fervent bibliographer and bibliophile. He befriended Spencer in the early nineteenth century, preparing monumental bibliographies of Spencer's collection and, with varying degrees of prudence and adroitness, advising and assisting Spencer in his book purchases.

However, no publication has yet focused on either Spencer sheaf catalog. While a few scholars have mentioned that the catalogs exist, to the present Edwards's description is the most comprehensive one ever published; recent scholarship has offered little if any discussion of the catalogs. For example, in "Mrs Rylands and the Spencer Library," Brenda Scragg wrote that Spencer owned two "two copies of [his sheaf] catalog."[17] Scragg reviewed Rylands records to determine how many books stayed at Althorp, how many came to the Rylands, how many were not found, and other dispositions.

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15. Peter H. Reid, "The Finest Private Library in Europe: A Brief Study of the Bibliophile Spencers of Althorp," *Library History* 14, no. 1 (May 1998): 65.

16. Even the Rylands describes Dibdin as George John's librarian. John Rylands Library, "ELGAR: Electronic Gateway to Archives at Rylands: Record for Catalogs of the Spencer Library," http://archives.li.man.ac.uk/ead/search/?operation=full&rsid=7&firstrec=1&numreq=20&highlight=1&hitposition=0 (accessed February 3, 2009).

17. Brenda J. Scragg, "Mrs Rylands and the Spencer Library," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 82, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 220.

Anthony Lister has contributed thorough and broad studies of Spencer's book collection, his collecting efforts, and his relationship with Dibdin. In an article published in the John Rylands Library bulletin, Lister discussed how Spencer amassed his collection.[18] This article does not mention the sheaf catalogs, though it does indirectly dispel any theory that Dibdin was involved with the catalogs. As Lister discovered, Dibdin's activities regarding Spencer's book collection were limited and it is therefore highly unlikely that he initiated or even contributed to Spencer's sheaf catalog.

In "George John, 2nd Earl Spencer and His 'Librarian' Thomas Frognall Dibdin," Lister noted that Spencer's librarian, Tommaso de Ocheda, worked on a "manuscript catalogue intended to prevent the ordering of duplicates."[19] This catalog could be Spencer's sheaf catalog; Ocheda's handwriting does not appear in Spencer's other library catalogs.

As Lister's research into Spencer and Dibdin uncovered, Dibdin never served as Spencer's librarian, though many have assumed he was. Lister places the word "librarian" in quotation marks in his title to highlight this misperception. Scragg in "Mrs Rylands and the Spencer library" referred to Dibdin as such, as did Edwards and Fletcher

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18. Anthony Lister, "The Althorp Library of the Second Earl Spencer, Now in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester: Its Formation and Growth," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 71, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 67-86.

19. Anthony Lister, "George John, 2nd Earl Spencer and His 'Librarian', Thomas Frognall Dibdin," in *Bibliophily*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Cambridge [England]: Chadwyck-Healy, 1986), 90-119.

in their respective books.[20] Fletcher even stated that Dibdin received a stipend for

serving as Spencer's librarian.[21]

Lister's PhD dissertation, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1776-1847, and 'the

Bibliomania': A Study in Early Nineteenth Century Bibliophily," focused on Dibdin and

his relationship with Spencer.[22] Using archival material at the Rylands, the British

Library, and other repositories, Lister described Dibdin's visits to Spencer House and

Althorp, his relatively tumultuous relationship with Spencer, and the Earl's book

collecting activities. Lister's dissertation provides one of the few sympathetic portraits of

Dibdin.

Several recent books treating Spencer family history and residences provide

helpful background information. Joseph Friedman's fascinating examination of Spencer

House, exhaustively researched and copiously illustrated, was issued after the London

residence was lavishly restored to its eighteenth-century glory.[23] Friedman described

how Spencer adapted the palace's rooms for his library; he also details how subsequent

commercial tenants adapted these rooms, and the rest of the palace, by carving the space

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20. Scragg, "Mrs Rylands and the Spencer Library," 217; Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* 414, 422; and Fletcher, *English Book Collectors,* 310.

21. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors,* 310.

22. Anthony Lister, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1776-1847, and 'the Bibliomania': A Study in Early Nineteenth Century Bibliophily" (PhD dissertation, University of Manchester, 1978).

23. Joe Friedman and Mark Fiennes, *Spencer House: Chronicle of a Great London Mansion* (London: Zwemmer, 1993).

into office cubicles and hanging fluorescent bulbs from the grand ceiling, among other wrenching but ultimately reversed modifications.

Charles Spencer, the ninth and current Earl Spencer, published *Althorp: The Story of an English House* the year after his famous sister, Princess Diana, died. Unpleasantly casual (he felt close to an ancestor because they shared the same astrological sign),[24] Spencer's book offers little new information. By the following year, however, Spencer's writing ability and scholarship had improved and he produced a personal yet relatively scrutinizing history entitled *The Spencer Family.*

In 1984, Georgina Battiscombe published a warmly written and well-researched study, *The Spencers of Althorp.*[25] Unlike many chronicles of the Althorp library sale, Battiscombe's book describes how the Althorp libraries looked after the books left. *The Spencers of Althorp* also gives readers a glimpse of how the fifth Earl Spencer and his wife weathered the absence of thousands of treasured books.[26]

John Poyntz Spencer, the fifth Earl Spencer, recorded his perspective of the historic sale in correspondence collected in *The Red Earl: The Papers of the Fifth Earl Spencer, 1835-1910.*[27] Unobtrusively and helpfully edited by Peter Gordon, the letters

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24. Charles Spencer, *Althorp: The Story of an English House* (London: Viking, 1998), 14.

25. Georgina Battiscombe, *The Spencers of Althorp* (London: Constable, 1984).

26. Ibid., 237.

27. John Poyntz Spencer, *The Red Earl: The Papers of the Fifth Earl Spencer, 1835-1910,* ed. Peter Gordon (Northampton [England]: Northamptonshire Record Society, 1981).

demonstrate that John felt that selling the books was the only way he could ensure Althorp would remain in the Spencer family for the next generation.[28]

In addition to researching the Spencer collection, Brenda Scragg provided the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* entry on John and Enriqueta Rylands. While this article focuses on the Rylandses and the Spencer acquisition, Scragg briefly mentioned the sheaf catalogs, describing them as "handwritten catalogs of [Spencer's] collection."[29] Scragg further noted that the Rylands catalog "did not represent a complete and accurate catalog of the collection, but it often yields useful information."[30]

A lengthy article published in 1870, "Lord Spencer's Library: A Sketch of a Visit to Althorp, Northamptonshire" may mention the catalog.[31] The Lord Spencer in the title is actually John Poyntz Spencer, the fifth Earl. Samuel Timmins, the author, wrote, "the catalogue of [Spencer's collection] fills two hundred and fifty volumes of titles."[32] This brief notation may describe Spencer's sheaf catalog; the Grolier's catalog has 249 sheaves or volumes and the Rylands catalog has 240. In 1884, Charles Bruce, a member of Parliament and friend of John Poyntz Spencer, published the two-part article, "The

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28. Spencer, *The Red Earl,* 196.

29. Brenda J. Scragg, "John Rylands and Enriqueta Augustina Tennant Rylands," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Nineteenth-Century British Book-Collectors and Bibliographers,* ed. William Baker and Kenneth Womack, Vol. 184 (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1997), 394.

30. Ibid., 394.

31. Samuel Timmins, *Lord Spencer's Library: A Sketch of a Visit to Althorp, Northamptonshire* (Birmingham: s.n., 1870).

32. Ibid., 15.

Althorp Library" in the magazine *Book-Lore*.[33] In the article, Bruce gave a cursory

history of the library, focusing on its treasures. He may have written the piece to help

cultivate a competitive market of potential buyers; a few years later he wrote Spencer that

he was composing some "small work on the Library" to help publicize the books after

Spencer mentioned he was contemplating selling them.[34]

Finally, Thomas Frognall Dibdin has provided generously detailed, though

sometimes unreliable, information about Spencer, his books, and his habits. In 1811,

Dibdin initiated his first literary effort that directly involved Spencer. After convincing

Spencer to give him access to the Spencer House library, Dibdin produced a brief (thirty-

four-page) book, *Book Rarities*, which described twelve rarely encountered early printed

books.[35] Dibdin intended the book to serve almost as a promotional brochure, to show

accomplished book collectors the sort of bibliographic treatment Dibdin could apply to

their books. Ten of the titles in *Book Rarities* came from Spencer's collection at the time.

In a dramatic twist Dibdin greatly appreciated, the first book he described – the 1471

Valdarfer Boccaccio, the rare edition of the poet's *Il decamerone* – was owned by fellow

bibliophile the Marquis of Blandford at the time; about eight years later, Spencer

acquired it at a fraction of the price Blandford paid.

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33. Charles Bruce, "The Althorp Library (Part I)," *Book-Lore: A Magazine Devoted to Old-Time Literature,* no. 2 (January 1885): 33-38.

34. Spencer, *The Red Earl,* 195.

35. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Book Rarities, or, a Descriptive Catalogue of Some of the Most Curious, Rare, and Valuable Books of Early Date Chiefly in the Collection of the Right Honourable George John Earl Spencer* (London: W. Bulmer, 1811).

In 1814, Dibdin published the first volume of his monumental study of Spencer's early printed books.[36] Each volume presents books in thematic categories, with Volume 1 containing block books, theology (including Latin Bibles, German-language Bibles, psalters, works by St. Augustine, and similar items), and ancient classics (including works by Aesop, Cicero, Pliny, and others). Volume 1 amply demonstrates Dibdin's strengths and weaknesses: each book receives a lengthy description of its text, with many footnoted digressions; almost every description includes a facsimile of the book's type and even of its illustrations, for illustrated books.

Reading this volume, one quickly understands why Dibdin's bibliographical publications nearly bankrupted him. He devoted a great deal of time to composing the book entries and used high-quality paper, an expensive printer, a second and sometimes a third ink color, and dozens of illustrations. Even though Spencer paid many of the printing expenses in advance, Dibdin did not earn anything from his work unless the sales grossed an amount that exceeded Spencer's investment.[37] Moreover, Dibdin often incurred additional costs because he wished to change text after it was typeset or wished to include more engravings or woodcuts. An especially lavish example of Dibdin's extravagance appears opposite page 107; it is a facsimile of a blue and black initial appearing in Fust and Schoeffer's "Psalter," printed at Mainz in 1457.

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36. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana; or, a Descriptive Catalogue of the Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century, and of Many Valuable First Editions, in the Library of George John Earl Spencer, K.G. &c. &c. &c.*, Vol. 1 (London: W. Bulmer, 1814).

37. Lister, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1776-1847, and 'the Bibliomania,'" Chap. 9, 10.

Volume 2 completes the ancient classics category, while Volume 3 contains

collections of classics (mainly anthologies of Greek writers and agricultural writers),

grammars and lexicons, and a disturbingly large miscellaneous section. Volume 4,

printed in 1815, continues the miscellaneous category, Italian books, books printed by

William Caxton, Letton and Machlinia, Wynkyn de Worde, Richard Pynson, books

printed at the University of Oxford and at the Abbey of St. Albans, and a "supplement" of

books recently added to Spencer's collection or inadvertently omitted from earlier

volumes. Volume 4 also includes an index by author (or title for books with no author)

and by printer name and a list of works having an unknown printer.

After having Volume 4 printed, Dibdin turned to Althorp[38] to describe the estate

and its artwork and books. In 1822, he produced the Volumes 1 and 2 of the *Aedes*

Althorpianae,[39] a "supplement" to the first four volumes of the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*.

The title of the two-volume supplement means "The House of Althorp" or "The Temple

of Althorp." These volumes differ significantly from their predecessors, as Dibdin

devotes several dozen pages to Spencer family history, Althorp's architectural aspects

and layout, paintings, and other non-book matters. In addition, the book descriptions are

briefer than those in the first four volumes. Helpfully, Dibdin included a diagram of

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38. During Spencer's lifetime, and for a short but indeterminate time after his death, most of his incunables were kept at Spencer House, in London.

39. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, A*edes Althorpianae, or, an Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp: The Residence of George John Earl Spencer, K.G.; to Which is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, Vol. 1 (London: W. Nicol, Shakspeare Press, 1822).

Althorp's first floor, labeling the library rooms and the subject matters included in each

room.

Dibdin apparently rushed to finish Volume 2 of the *Aedes Althorpianae*. It lacks

a table of contents or any kind of prefatory matter. It also contains several misspellings

and other errors, some of which Dibdin corrected through an errata sheet or within the

text, for previously published mistakes. The most embarrassing errors were discovered

by Dibdin's critics or by more esteemed bibliographers such as Jacques Charles Brunet.[40]

Most troubling to librarians concerned with helping readers search for relevant books is

that Dibdin used one ill-defined category for the more than three hundred books

described in this volume: "miscellaneous authors."

Dibdin's final contribution to Spencer's library was a descriptive bibliography of

the books Spencer acquired from the Duke of Cassano Serra, a Neapolitan nobleman who

had amassed a collection rich in incunables.[41] This bibliography, which Dibdin

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40. In the *Aedes Althorpianae*, Dibdin admitted that Brunet was correct about the illustration process used in a remarkable book written by the German cleric Breydenbach (1440-1497) of his travels to Palestine. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Aedes Althorpianae, or, an Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp: The Residence of George John Earl Spencer, K.G.; to Which Is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, Vol. 2 (London: W. Nicol, Shakspeare Press, 1822), 88. In *The Bibliographical Decameron*, Volume 1, published five years earlier, Dibdin had triumphantly and yet inaccurately challenged Brunet's conclusion. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography*, Vol. 1 (London: W. Bulmer, 1817), 296.

41. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana; or, a Descriptive Catalogue of Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century, Lately Forming Part of the Library of the Duke Di Cassano Serra, and Now the Property of George John Earl Spencer, K.G., with a General Index of Authors and Editions Contained in the Present Volume, and in the Bibliotheca Spenceriana and Aedes Althorpianae*, Vol. 7 (London: William Nicol, 1823).

described as Volume 7 of the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*,[42] also includes an index of authors and editions contained in all seven volumes. Because Spencer's collection already included more desirable copies (that is, more complete, without marginalia, or in finer condition) of some of the Cassano Serra books, the lesser copies were sold at auction; on pages 203-208, Dibdin listed sixty-eight of these copies along with the prices each obtained.

Volumes 5 through 7 may also have engendered the often-repeated error that Dibdin was Spencer's librarian. Their title pages describe Dibdin as "Librarian to his Lordship," a title for which Dibdin beseeched Spencer throughout their long working relationship. The only evidence that Dibdin served in this role are these three title pages, from 1822 and 1823; because the identity of Spencer's librarians directly relates to the sheaf catalogs' origin and maintenance, Dibdin's putative service as Spencer's librarian is discussed further below.

Dibdin also mentions Spencer and Ocheda, Spencer's first librarian, in Volume 3 of the *Bibliographical Decameron*.[43] This three-volume excursion through book history uses fictionalized characters (such as "Lysander," "Almansa," and "Philemon") to elaborate upon manuscripts, early printed books, book collecting, and similar topics. Dibdin arranged the topics into a group of ten, corresponding to Boccaccio's ten-day long story structure in the *Decamerone*. Dibdin's stories are far too long and digressive to be effective; indeed, the *Bibliographical Decameron* aptly illustrates Edward Edwards's

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42. Dibdin, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, Vol. 7, 211.

43. Dibdin, *The Bibliographical Decameron.*

grumbling, "if Dibdin's life had depended on telling a plain story in a plain way, he must have died immediately."[44]

On the ninth day of Dibdin's narrative, he describes an auction battle for the Valdarfer Boccaccio, in which Spencer was a key bidder; on the tenth day, he compliments Ocheda and in a lengthy footnote describes his visit to Althorp's libraries.

After Spencer's death, Dibdin published *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*.[45] Dibdin described his friendship with Spencer, the work he conducted diligently and blissfully at the Spencer House library, and his interactions with Ocheda.

Brief bibliographic information about thousands of titles Spencer collected appears in the three-volume *Catalogue of the Printed Books and Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library*.[46] This catalog is not comprehensive, as it covers "only" the Spencer items that Mrs. Rylands bought and kept for the Rylands. It also combines Spencer acquisitions with other titles the Rylands accessioned, so that a reader cannot use this catalog to determine which books came from Spencer's collection. However, the Spencer titles by far outnumbered (and outshone) other books comprising the collection as of 1899, and therefore this catalog has information relevant to most of the books now at the Rylands.

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44. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries*, 407.

45. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life, with Anecdotes of Books, and Book Collectors,* Vol. 2 (London: John Major, 1836).

46. John Rylands Library and Edward Gordon Duff, *Catalogue of the Printed Books and Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, Manchester* (Manchester: J.E. Cornish, 1899). Because E. Gordon Duff, the librarian Mrs. Rylands hired to catalog the collection, prepared the catalog, this thesis and other writings refer to the 1899 catalog as the "Duff catalog."

"The Bibliomania"

Another important source of relevant information concerns the development and refinement of antiquarian book collecting as an avocation and profession. This period was known both affectionately and derisively as "the Bibliomania," a term that Dibdin helped to popularize in his writings.[47]

Beginning in the late 1700s, this brief but pivotal era marked a change in book collectors and in book collecting habits. During the Bibliomania, wealthy European men (and a few women) interested in collecting books began seeking old and rare books in the marketplace and in private, ecclesiastical, and even public libraries, particularly "on the Continent." Their furious bidding at auctions drove prices to levels never seen before. Dibdin's various editions of *Bibliomania* are historical documents, written by a witness and book-lover himself. While the excessive prose far outweighs the books' informational content, they do provide information about important acquisitions by prominent collectors, including Spencer.

Both *Bibliomania* and *The Bibliographical Decameron* describe book auctions. However, only the latter includes the Duke of Roxburghe sale, an event that inspired Spencer, Dibdin, and a few others to establish the Roxburghe Club, a social organization of bibliophiles who were also interested in reproducing fine copies of early printed books.

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47. Eric Holzenberg, "Book Collecting," *Britannica Online Encyclopedia,* http://search.eb.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/eb/article-254774 (accessed November 15, 2007). See also Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *The Bibliomania; or, Book-Madness; Containing Some Account of the History, Symptoms and Cure of this Fatal Disease, in an Epistle Addressed to Richard Heber, Esq.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, by W. Savage, 1809).

Seymour de Ricci's *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts,* more simply written and yet equally as informative, devotes a chapter to the bibliomania era.[48]

Recent scholarship includes Nicolas Basbanes's book history trilogy, which presents a rich, historical examination of book collectors, bibliomanes, and the value of books to western civilization. The first volume, *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books,* relates a history of book collecting (legal and otherwise) from antiquity to modern times.[49] The *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s entry on book collecting, written by Eric Holzenberg, provides an insightful overview of the history and influences of book collecting.[50]

History of Sheaf Catalogs and Card Catalogs and Related Aspects of Cataloging History

Relatively little library scholarship regarding the development and history of cataloging formats has been published. Virtually nothing published in the last fifty years focuses on the sheaf catalog. However, a few early twentieth century publications describe possible origins to the sheaf (and card) catalog. For example, "Library Economy in the 16th Century," an article in the British *Library Association Record* of 1909, describes the bibliographical work of Conrad Gesner, a physician and naturalist as

48. Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts.*

49. Nicholas A. Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books* (New York: H. Holt, 1995).

50. Holzenberg, "Book Collecting."

well as bibliographer, who suggested that catalogers use strips of paper to facilitate the alphabetizing process.[51]

Minnie Stewart Rhodes James addresses the card catalog's history in "Progress of the Modern Card Catalog Principle," a presentation she made to the New York Federation of Women's Clubs in 1901.[52] In *Contributions to a History of Alphabetization in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Lloyd W. Daly described how the Vatican Library Custodian, Leo Alattius, compiled a library catalog in the late seventeenth century.[53] Another article printed in the Library Association Record briefly discusses the card catalog's origin. The author, Richard B. Prosser, wrote that the Abbé Rozier "a well-known French savant" of the eighteenth century, may have started the card catalog.[54] More recently, Sandy Brooks provided an overview of the card catalog's history in *The Whole Library Handbook 3*.[55]

The Abbé's methods, and their historical context, were more thoroughly described in Judith Hopkins's "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the origins of the Card

51. W. R. B. Prideaux, "Library Economy in the Sixteenth Century," *Library Association Record* 11 (April 1909): 152-74.

52. Minnie Stewart Rhodes James, "The Progress of the Modern Card Catalog Principle," in *The Catalog and Cataloging* ([Hamden, CT]: Shoe String Press, 1969), 56-63. (Originally a paper read at the Buffalo meeting of the New York Federation of Women's Clubs, October 8, 1901.)

53. Lloyd W. Daly, *Contributions to a History of Alphabetization in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Brussels: Latomus Revue D'Études Latines, 1967).

54. Richard B. Prosser, "The Origin of the Card Catalogue: A Brief Note," *Library Association Record* 2 (1900): 651.

55. Sandy Brooks, "A History of the Card Catalog," in *The Whole Library Handbook 3: Current Data, Professional Advice, and Curiosa about Libraries and Library Services* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2000), 311-14.

Catalog."[56] This article addresses the bibliographical innovations that emerged when France's revolutionary government issued a law requiring municipalities to catalog their books and manuscripts. As her title suggests, Hopkins traced the card catalog to 1790s France. In 2006, J.H. Bowman published "The Decline of the Printed Catalogue in Britain," which examines the printed catalog (also called a "book catalog"), its history, and its challengers.[57] Bowman wrote that the sheaf catalog, as well as its better-known cousin, the card catalog, was considered an alternative for the more expensive printed catalog.

Nicholson Baker provoked a long-lived controversy with his article, "Discards," a wide-ranging piece that emanates dismay, disgust, and alarm over the change from card catalogs to OPACs.[58] The article alerted readers that libraries were destroying – or had already destroyed – their efficient card catalogs, only to replace them with clunky, inaccurate, and sluggish OPACs. Baker's article is valuable because it includes some history of the card catalog and demonstrates the need for library science to document pre-OPAC cataloging tools. Three professors of library and information science echoed Baker's concerns, urging librarians to preserve at least some card catalogs.[59]

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56. Judith Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," *Libraries and Culture* 27, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 378.

57. J. H. Bowman, "The Decline of the Printed Catalogue in Britain," *Library History* 22, no. 2 (July 2006): 67-99.

58. Nicholson Baker, "Discards," *New Yorker* 69 (April 4, 1994): 64-86.

59. Cox, Greenberg, and Porter, "Access Denied."

Other scholars have written about the general history of cataloging, addressing both the "inner format" (e.g., the intellectual organization) and "outer format" (physical format).[60] In 1939, Dorothy May Norris published an engaging historical review of remarkable depth and breadth.[61] Norris's book, her thesis for the (U.K.) Library Association's honors diploma program, infuses cataloging history with a welcome sense of drama and humor. Ruth Ann Strout also gave a broad, absorbing (though briefer than Norris) history of cataloging methods and formats in "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes"; the time period Strout covered begins in approximately 2000 B.C.E. and ends in the early 1900s.[62] We learn from Charles Martel's essay that the card catalog was "still in a rather timid experimental stage" in 1876.[63]

Encyclopedia entries can also provide relevant information. The "Catalogs and Cataloging" entry in the *Encyclopedia of Library History* focuses on cataloging rules and

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60. These helpful terms come from Bowman's article, though they were likely used by catalogers long before; L. Stanley Jast uses the term "outer form" when discussing library catalogs' physical forms in his 1902 article, "The Sheaf and Card Catalogues: A Comparison."

61. Dorothy May Norris, *A History of Cataloguing and Cataloguing Methods, 1100-1850, with an Introductory Survey of Ancient Times: A Thesis Accepted for the Honours Diploma of the Library Association* (London: Grafton, 1939).

62. Ruth French Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," in *The Catalog and Cataloging*, ed. Arthur Ray Rowland ([Hamden, CT]: Shoe String Press, 1969), 3-33. (Originally published in *Library Quarterly*, no. 26 (October 1956): 254-75.)

63. Charles Martel, "Cataloging, 1876-1926," in *The Catalog and Cataloging*, ed. Arthur Ray Rowland ([Hamden, CT]: Shoe String Press, 1969), 40-50. (Originally published in *Catalogers' and Classifiers' Yearbook*, no. 8 (1939): 96-101.)

codes, while the entry in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* provides a more detailed history of the catalog's inner and outer formats.[64]

Most of the remaining relevant publications were written for librarians who were seeking practical guidance for providing their patrons with effective catalogs. These articles tend to discuss the advantages or disadvantages of the sheaf catalog versus the card catalog or printed catalog. While they do not explicitly describe the sheaf catalog's origins or history, these publications imply when and where the sheaf and card catalogs were popular and what their respective advantages and disadvantages were. For example, James Douglas Stewart, author of a definitive handbook on the sheaf catalog, wrote admiringly of this format's superiority over the card and printed catalog.[65] Harriet E. Howe, who wrote a practical guide entitled simply *The Catalog*, discussed card catalogs in her book but deferred to Stewart on the sheaf catalog.[66] In 1902, Stanley Jast noted that the sheaf catalog, while not new itself, was a "new rival" to the card catalog.[67]

Reviewing professional, scholarly, and some popular literature demonstrates that Spencer's sheaf catalogs have received minimal attention. The literature also includes a rich history of library cataloging methods and of book collecting and book collectors.

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64. Eugene R. Hanson and Jay E. Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science,* ed. Miriam A. Drake (New York: Marcel Dekker, 2003), 431-67; and Michael Carpenter, "Catalogs and Cataloging," in *Encyclopedia of Library History,* ed. Wayne A. Wiegand and Donald G. Davis, Vol. 503 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 107-17.

65. Stewart, *The Sheaf Catalogue.*

66. Harriet Emma Howe, *The Catalog* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1921).

67. L. Stanley Jast, "The Sheaf and Card Catalogues: A Comparison," *The Library World* 5, no. 49 (July 1902): 129-32.

This historical information provides an essential and engrossing context to Spencer's remarkable catalogs.

Methodology

A Systematic Sampling of Catalog Slips

After providing a relevant historical background, this thesis will present a detailed physical description of the Spencer catalog in the Grolier Club's collection. The methodology used in this thesis seeks to approximate the catalog's intended purpose as closely as possible; this goal entailed looking up books in printed catalogs, namely the 1899 catalog of the Spencer collection (the Duff catalog) and Thomas Frognall Dibdin's seven-volume *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, which focused on Spencer's incunabula.[68] This study also searched the Rylands online public-access catalog (OPAC) for these books. All these searches helped decipher some sheaf abbreviations and uncovered new information, though they were not able to solve every puzzle presented by the catalogs. Finally, this thesis will compare the sheaf catalog to three roughly contemporaneous private catalogs also held by the Grolier Club as well as to other Spencer library catalogs.

This methodology required examining as many slips from as many sheaves as possible, while keeping the sampling simple, so that the author could relatively easily replicate this process at the Rylands. Therefore, this study examined the first slip in the first sheaf, then skipped one sheaf and examined the first slip in the third; then skipped two and examined the first slip in the sixth sheaf. Using this systematic approach, this

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68. Please see the Literature Review for descriptions of Duff's and Dibdin's books.

examination continued alternating in this pattern – skipping one sheaf, then two sheaves, then one, etc. – until the author had examined the first slip in each of the chosen sheaves in all four drawers.

Upon applying this methodology, a few modifications were required. Because some slips were not bibliographic records but cross-references, the author followed these latter slips to the bibliographic records they referenced, writing down or entering into a Word document all information found. Using this approach, this study examined ninety-two of the first-page sheaves selected; the author also examined several dozen more slips, by following cross-references. In addition to the systematic sampling methodology, this study examined one entire sheaf ("Aristox.-Ash.") to observe the records as a single sheaf. These approaches exposed a wide range of handwritings, formats, and types of information.

As noted above, this methodology required examining and recording the contents of each slip, creating a lengthy table. For each slip that described a book (rather than a cross-reference), the author searched for that title on the Rylands OPAC and in the Duff and Dibdin catalogs. While very few of the titles show in Dibdin's books,[69] almost all of them appear on both the Rylands OPAC and in the Duff catalog.

One promising aspect to the accession numbers surfaced during a search of Spencer books in the Rylands OPAC.[70] While the Rylands does not catalog the Spencer

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69. In the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana,* Dibdin focused on incunabula and certain first editions; a substantial majority of slips studied for this thesis did not involve such titles.

70. As this thesis will explain, Spencer assigned an accession number to each title he acquired.

collection separately, its OPAC does help one identify books that came from the Spencer library: such books have a shelfmark (or call number) that begins with a forward slash followed by a series of numbers. All other special collection items cataloged at the Rylands have a shelfmark that begins with one letter or two letters. This difference arose because the University of Manchester, which customarily assigns shelfmarks that begin with a letter, retained Earl Spencer's shelfmarks when it merged the John Rylands Memorial Library (the library established by Enriqueta Rylands, who bought Spencer's fabled collection in 1892) with its own collection.

Significantly, the accession numbers in the Grolier Club's catalog matched the shelfmarks in the Rylands OPAC. This coincidence strongly suggested that the two catalogs contained identical information, as Rylands catalogers obtained their shelfmarks either from the Rylands sheaf catalog or from the books themselves.

Research in Manchester, England

To fully document the Grolier's Spencer catalog, it was necessary to compare this catalog with its near-twin at the Rylands and to conduct research in the Spencer manuscript collections that this institution also holds. Therefore, the author visited the Rylands to apply the same methodology used in reviewing the Grolier Club's catalog: recording the first entry in each of the sheaves analogous to the Grolier Club sheaves, following any cross-references through. Where the sheaves differed,[71] this study

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71. Although many of the Rylands and Grolier sheaves correspond exactly, other sheaves in the catalogs were divided differently and therefore some first slips do not match.

recorded the first slip, even though it did not match the first slip in the corresponding *Grolier sheaf; the author also located and recorded the Rylands slip that did match.*

Fortunately, the Rylands allowed the author to digitally photograph the chest, its drawers, sheaves, and several individual slips. These photographs have allowed a more thoughtful examination and comparison of the two catalogs. Most importantly, by assessing each slip's handwriting and execution, this study has found that the two catalogs were most likely created at different times, with the Grolier catalog preceding the Rylands catalog.

Archival Research

This thesis also presents research conducted into the Spencer manuscript collections held by the Rylands. While these papers and catalogs did not conclusively answer all the questions this thesis pursued, they did provide information about who compiled the catalog and when as well as other compelling details about Spencer and Dibdin.

The manuscript collections consulted at the Rylands include letters Spencer wrote to Dibdin, a fellow bibliophile with whom Spencer had a somewhat complicated relationship, and letters Dibdin wrote to Spencer and others. Serendipitously, one manuscript collection included a note signed by Tommaso de Ocheda,[72] Spencer's first librarian, thereby providing an essential example of Ocheda's handwriting.

The Rylands also holds several manuscript catalogs that covered Spencer's library, one representing the library Spencer inherited from his father and another bearing

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72. This name is pronounced "oh-KEY-da."

the nameplate of the fifth Earl Spencer, the last Spencer to own George John's collection.[73] Studying these catalogs helped narrow the range of purposes the sheaf catalog may have filled; they also raised several enticing possibilities for future research.

Spencer's cataloging methods and tools deserve far more attention than this single thesis offers. Comparing the two catalogs, investigating the Grolier sheaf catalog's provenance, and researching Spencer's additional library catalogs answered questions and exposed new conundrums and uncertainties. Accordingly, I discuss several intriguing areas needing additional investigation; answering these questions would greatly enhance our understanding of nineteenth-century cataloging technology and Spencer's remarkable library management.

Organization of This Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. The current chapter, Chapter One, introduces the thesis and describes the research methodology and results of a literature review. Chapter Two presents a historical overview of catalogs and cataloging. Chapter Three discusses "the bibliomania," Spencer, his libraries, and his librarians. Chapter Four examines the inner and outer formats of Spencer's sheaf catalogs. Chapter Five describes Spencer's many other catalogs as well as library catalogs owned by contemporaneous collectors. Chapter Six concludes the thesis.

Library and information science is a forward-looking field; it develops advanced tools for finding materials while adapting to developing needs and formats that did not

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73. The sale receives greater treatment in Chapter Three.

exist ten years ago. This focus has greatly benefited library users but it creates the risk that we will forget antecedent technology – the tools that helped lead us to our current "advanced" state. Thus the card catalog has nearly become a relic, resembling a phonograph in an age of digital music.

In this light, Spencer's sheaf catalogs are like the wax cylinders that preceded vinyl records – the technological innovation that made the card catalog possible. Thus, this thesis discusses a historical marking point in library history, when finding aids and bibliographies truly became catalogs as we think of them today.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM CLAY TABLETS TO THE CARD CATALOG:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIBRARY
CATALOG

Background and Terminology

As a review of cataloging history demonstrates, the path to the card catalog and

the sheaf catalog was circuitous and troubled. Cataloging knowledge was acquired, lost,

and rediscovered over the centuries. For example, bibliographers and librarians in the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries used strips of paper, rather than folio pages, to record

bibliographical information. Yet, even though their professional forbears used a format

that hinted at the compact systems of the future, most librarians did not use the sheaf or

card catalogs widely until the late nineteenth century. Cataloging rules faced similar

challenges; while catalogers attempted to codify various cataloging approaches long

before they wrestled with the ideal physical format, these attempts took centuries to

produce nationally accepted cataloging codes.

This chapter uses the terms "inner form" and "outer form"[1] to discuss the library

catalog's development. According to Bowman, inner form describes a catalog's

organization and any rules that the compiler used. Outer form regards a catalog's

physical appearance, i.e., whether it is a bound book, sheaf catalog, card catalog, or other

format. Together, these terms cover a library catalog's most significant features.

First, I will discuss the catalog's inner form as it has appeared beginning with the

oldest surviving records through the card catalog, focusing on western Europe. This

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1. Bowman, "The Decline of the Printed Catalogue in Britain," 67.

section will also mention notable bibliographical figures such as Conrad Gessner, Johann Tritheim, and Antonio Panizzi. The second section of this chapter will address the development of the outer form, from the earliest uses of paper slips to the card and sheaf catalogs.

<div align="center">The Inner Form</div>

Wherever people had books or written records, they often created lists naming these items – an early form of a library catalog. The first book lists were likely begun in Mesopotamia, in approximately 2000 B.C.E.; ancient Egyptians may also have cataloged books or records during this epoch but clay tablets, the medium used by Sumerians, were more durable than papyrus, used by Egyptians. Therefore, records of Mesopotamian, rather than Egyptian, attempts at cataloging have survived.[2] The earliest surviving records listed religious texts, identified by apparently key words.[3] Later catalogs compiled in Nineveh listed each text by writer's name, followed by the father's and paternal grandfather's name, and included the dimensions as measured by the number of lines in the text.

In the first millennium in Western Europe, catalogers, with one or two exceptions, did not advance beyond producing unordered lists of books. And while catalogs produced during the eras before the high Middle Ages often followed some order, these documents served as inventory listings and would not be recognized as true catalogs.[4] To

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2. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 5.

3. Carpenter, "Catalogs and Cataloging,"107.

4. Ibid., 108.

find a book, one would likely have consulted the library's keeper of books, *armarius,* or

armaria (the male and female medieval equivalent of a librarian, the latter being rare).

The few libraries that existed – virtually all in monasteries, convents, or monarchical

residences – had slender collections, and the *armarii* could usually keep the library

"catalog" in their heads.

Before the printing press was introduced in the mid-fifteenth century, libraries

grew slowly in Europe. Indeed, in the manuscript age, there were far fewer books and

fewer libraries than post-1450. Each book represented weeks of work, as the time-

consuming practice of copying a text by hand could begin only after the parchment or

vellum – the writing surface – had been prepared; this process entailed soaking the

animal skins for several days, stretching and drying the skins, among other demanding

steps. Thus, the means of producing books limited their supply. In addition, the low

level of literacy seen during the Middle Ages helped to constrain demand for books.

Unsurprisingly, catalogs changed slowly during this period, though some keepers

of books introduced a few innovations. A catalog prepared for the Sorbonne at the

University of Paris in the thirteenth century organized the library's books, which

numbered over 1,000, into ten major divisions. Another bold step was the *Registrum*

librorum angliae, an attempt to produce the first union catalog in England. Compiled

over the period beginning 1250 and ending 1296, this catalog sought to list the

collections of 183 monastic libraries.[5]

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5. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 435.

The fourteenth century witnessed the production of many catalogs, though with few innovations.[6] Many catalogs arranged titles by subject classifications and a few even noted shelf locations. Yet even though the newly established universities were developing libraries for their scholars, university catalogs were primitive, more like inventory lists than actual finding aids.[7]

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, bibliography emerged. As defined by Theodore Besterman, bibliography seeks to produce "a list of books arranged according to some permanent principle."[8] In contrast, many catalogs or inventories produced during the prior centuries did not follow predictable patterns such as alphabetization of author names or use of an author's surname as a point of entry – indeed, the concept of "main entry" was rarely invoked before the Renaissance. And even if the entries were alphabetized, they were usually ordered according to the first letter only. "Absolute" alphabetical order did not become the standard until the printing press emerged.[9] In addition, many catalogs still functioned more like unordered bibliographies, as they did not offer much help in trying to locate a book.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, one of Western Europe's first bibliographers, Johann Tritheim, emerged. Tritheim produced a monumental bibliography of ecclesiastical writers, arranging the bibliography chronologically; this

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6. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 435.

7. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 13.

8. Theodore Besterman, *The Beginnings of Systematic Bibliography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 2.

9. Daly, *Contributions to a History of Alphabetization, 85.*

organization offered readers a unified point of entry – a main entry – a basic principle of cataloging.[10] Recognizing that readers may need an alternative means to locate books, Tritheim also developed the "added entry" concept: he appended an alphabetical list of authors to the chronologically arranged bibliography. He thereby created a novel and valuable tool for fifteenth century scholars, who could use the amended bibliography to find relevant books by either title or author.

One of Tritheim's bibliographical successors was the scholar, physician, botanist, and bibliographer Conrad Gessner, who refined and expanded Tritheim's approach. In 1545, Gessner produced the first volume of his monumental (1,264 folio pages) *Bibliotheca universalis,* his attempt to provide bibliographical information for every Latin, Greek, and Hebrew author he knew.[11] For each work, Gessner sought to list author, title, printing date and place, and printer name; he even included his opinion of the books, demonstrating a profound knowledge of the classics.

Gessner followed this work with a subject index in 1548, *Pandectarum sive partitionum universalium (Pandectae).*[12] *Pandectae* arranged the works listed in *Bibliotheca universalis* into nineteen main classes or subject categories, which were then broken down further.[13] While catalogers over the previous centuries attempted to

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10. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 437, 462.

11. Hans Fischer, "Conrad Gessner (1516-1565) as Bibliographer and Encyclopedist," *The Library* 21, no. 4 (December 1966): 271.

12. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 15.

13. Hans H. Wellisch, *Conrad Gessner: A Bio-Bibliography* (Zug (Switzerland): IDC, 1984), 50.

organize books according to the classical subjects included in the *trivium* and

quadrivium[14] curricula, these organizational efforts were inconsistent and unreliable.

Gessner, who also used the *trivium* and *quadrivium* subjects to delineate classes, created

a systematic approach that any bibliographer or librarian could (and should, from

Gessner's perspective) follow. *Pandectae* also advised librarians how to shelve and

categorize books and suggested that librarians use the bibliography and index as catalogs

for their own libraries.[15]

Conrad Pellican, Gessner's Hebrew professor, condensed his student's

bibliographic and library theories into a four-part cataloging plan, which Pellican

introduced in 1532.[16] These rules included alphabetizing author names by first letter

only; providing a location list/inventory that used as a shelfmark an ordinary succession

of simple numbers, together with the authors' names and brief titles; and organizing

subjects under Gessner's twenty-one classifications. The final rule entailed alphabetizing

titles by *Schlagwort* – "the most striking term in the title."[17]

Forianus Treflerus, a Benedictine monk, published his own guide for library

catalogers in 1560.[18] Building upon Gessner's suggestion that his *Bibliotheca universalis*

and *Pandectae* serve as library catalogs, Treflerus recommended that libraries provide

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14. The trivium included grammar, rhetoric (i.e., literature, poetry, and writing), and logic, while the quadrivium covered arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

15. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 15.

16. Norris, *A History of Cataloguing and Cataloguing Methods,* 128.

17. Ibid.

18. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 428.

additional access points. For Treflerus, a library needed five catalogs: one arranged

alphabetically by author name; a second arranged in classed (i.e., subject classification)

order; third and fourth catalogs presenting information contained in the library's books,

with one arranged systematically and one organized alphabetically; and a fifth catalog

listing books whose age or condition required that they be kept apart from the main

collection.[19]

By attempting to replace useless traditions with effective cataloging methods,

Gessner and Treflerus transformed bibliography and librarianship; in fact, their

scholarship and vision helped develop these fields. Before Gessner and Treflerus, few

catalogs or indexes followed any pattern and most obstructed any attempts to find a book.

Their contributions sparked wider interest in creating systematic approaches to creating

catalogs.

However, while Gessner and Treflerus promoted ingenious and innovative ideas,

they both followed unhelpful bibliographical traditions. For example, both writers

alphabetized author names by first name. This approach often resulted in long strings of

entries under names like "Johann," the Latin form of John, Jean, Johannes, and other

versions of this name. Gessner did, however, contest this tradition indirectly, by

appending an author index with surnames first to his *Bibliotheca universalis*.[20]

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19. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 428.

20. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 15.

An English bookseller, Andrew Maunsell, challenged this unwritten rule in the preface to his 1595 *Catalogue of English Printed Books*.[21] Maunsell's catalog presented author names with surname listed first. In addition to this controversial approach, Maunsell combined three entry points – author name, translator name where relevant, and subject words – into one alphabetically arranged catalog.[22] Such catalogs, known as "dictionary catalogs" because they incorporate all entry points into one alphabetical arrangement, became popular in England during the nineteenth century.

Applied to library catalogs, the bibliographic insight of Gessler, Treflerus, and Maunsell could have helped librarians produce effective tools. The printing press had dramatically increased both the number of books libraries held and the number of libraries; readers needed much more than an inventory list to use these expanding collections. Yet library catalogs lagged behind the significant technological and social changes triggered by the printing press. Innovations in cataloging emerged from scholars, not from librarians.

One of the world's most eminent scholarly libraries, Oxford University's Bodleian Library, once lacked a catalog that students or faculty could use effectively. In fact, the University, which began in the late eleventh century, lacked an actual library for most of its early years. Its first library was completed sometime during the mid-1300s but was superseded by a grander, larger structure completed in 1488. However, this library had an even shorter life. In 1550 the newly formed Anglican Church, which

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21. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 15.

22. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 438.

sought to remove "all traces of Roman Catholicism, including 'superstitious books and images,'" stripped the University's new library of books.[23]

In 1602, Sir Thomas Bodley reopened Oxford's library, stocking it with books he and others donated. Books in the new library were shelved according to subject – theology, medicine, law, and the arts – and were then arranged alphabetically by author surname in each section.[24] Produced in 1605, the first printed catalog was simply a shelflist, posted at the bookcase ends. Typically for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the books were also organized by size, with folios chained to the reading desks and quartos and octavos shelved in locked cases.[25]

The Bodleian's second catalog, a manuscript catalog organized alphabetically by author, was unremarkable. However, the library's third catalog was innovative and bold, an early version of the dictionary catalog that would become popular in the nineteenth century. Printed in 1620, the Bodleian's dictionary catalog presented author names and work titles alphabetically in a single listing. [26]

The Bodleian's fourth catalog appeared in 1674. While bibliographers had already introduced the added entry concept, the 1674 catalog was the first library catalog to use added entries in the form of alternative author spellings and book titles. It continued the 1620 catalog's practice of using a catchword title for an anonymous tract.

23. Oxford University, "History of the Bodleian Library," http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about/history (accessed November 1, 2008).

24. Norris, *A History of Cataloguing and Cataloguing Methods.*

25. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 438-39.

26. Carpenter, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 109.

This type of title (a *Schlagwort*) is a slightly reworked version of a work's title that emphasizes the subject matter; the Schlagwort had also appeared in at least one mid-fifteenth century catalog.[27] The 1674 catalog included cross-references to variant author names and titles, an undoubtedly welcome feature.[28]

Unlike libraries in previous centuries, the Bodleian strove to improve its catalogs. Bodley himself worked on devising a cataloging code; he traveled often to the European continent to buy books for the library and needed a tool to help prevent him from buying duplicates and to direct his collecting efforts to books his library needed. Thus, Bodley approached library catalogs as a user rather than a compiler. This perspective informed Bodley's instructions to his first librarian, Thomas James, whom Bodley had engaged to prepare the library's catalogs.[29]

During the seventeenth century, librarians began to devise systematic approaches -- i.e., rules – for cataloging a library's collection. In 1627, Gabriel Naudé, a French librarian and scholar, wrote one of the first library science texts, *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* (or *Advice on Establishing a Library*).[30] His text emphasized the importance of library catalogs, advising that librarians create at least two: a classified

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27. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 439.

28. This catalog also inspired what may be the first recorded complaint by a cataloger. Thomas Hyde, the Bodleian librarian from 1659 to 1701, bemoaned the ill treatment many catalogers suffered and complained how "scornful is the average person of all cataloguing efforts." Norris, *A History of Cataloguing and Cataloguing Methods,* 150.

29. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 18.

30. "Gabriel Naudé," in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information,* Vol. 19 (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 277.

one and one arranged alphabetically by author. Similarly, John Dury, one of England's first modern librarians, urged librarians to create catalogs organized by sciences; in addition, he recommended compiling a catalog arranged by language.[31] Dury also advised compiling an annual supplement to the catalog and obtaining faculty opinions regarding acquisitions.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, additional librarians, such as Adrien Barillet and Frederic Rostgaard, helped to further refine the relatively new science of library cataloging. In 1685, Barillet introduced a set of cataloging rules for certain dictionary catalogs and championed the use of extensive cross-references, alphabetical indexes of authors' surnames, and other approaches that would modernize the library catalog.[32] Rostgaard devised a catalog intended to support a library that shelved authors on similar subjects together; editions of the same work would also be shelved together.[33] In the late 1800s, Rostgaard advocated appending an alphabetical index of subjects and authors to each catalog, creating separate entries for independents,[34] and supplying authors' names for anonymous works when known.[35]

These professional approaches manifest a significant break with medieval and Renaissance-era cataloging. In the seventeenth century, library-tenders began evolving

31. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 439-40.

32. Ibid., 440.

33. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 19.

34. As described in Chapter One, independents are books or pamphlets printed separately but bound together.

35. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 19.

into librarians. Instead of inventorying books and drafting catalogs that followed a hodge-podge of rules, if any, librarians began helping to connect readers with the information they were seeking. Librarians considered how a patron might use a catalog and grappled with questions that implicitly demonstrated the need for a cataloging code. Some of these questions, posed by the Bodleian assistant librarian Humphrey Wanley, included: should we catalog titles and printing dates in the language in which the book was written? Should we mention that the book lacks a printing place or date? Should we include the book's size?[36]

Many of these questions were answered in 1791, at least for French catalogers, when bibliographers selected by France's newly formed government drafted a cataloging code.[37] The post-revolutionary government had confiscated private and ecclesiastical libraries across France, creating an extensive and enormous national library. Governmental officials recognized the need to create a central inventory of the vast collection of books and manuscripts it had acquired, and appointed several respected scholars to approach this task.

However, the skill and knowledge level of library staff members around the country varied widely. Few, if any, of the book and manuscript custodians then working in France were trained as librarians, though the government did recommend that

36. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 440.

37. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 379-80.

catalogers "have some literary attainments" and knowledge of Latin.[38] A complicated

code would not be easily grasped and applied by non-librarians and non-bibliographers.

Such a code would also discourage would-be catalogers from their task. Therefore, the

government devised a simple cataloging code that could be applied uniformly.

Therefore, in 1791 the provisional French government devised a set of simple

cataloging rules. In Ruth French Strout's words, "[t]here was no fuss and bother or

philosophizing in this code."[39] The 1791 cataloging code instructed catalogers to

transcribe the title page, imprint (printer name, place, and date), size, and "any

exceptional features."[40] Catalogers were instructed to underline the author's surname so

that the record could be alphabetized by author name. The 1791 cataloging code also

required that each title have an accession number, one of the earliest known uses of such

a system.[41]

The 1791 cataloging code represented the first organized effort to establish

uniform cataloging principles. This milestone remained unchallenged until 1841, when

the British Museum, after years of rancorous debate, adopted its "Ninety-one Rules" of

cataloging.[42] The nineteenth century witnessed intense interest in creating definitive

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38. George Watson Cole, "An Early French 'General Catalog,'" *The Library Journal* 25, no. 7 (July 1900): 330.

39. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 21.

40. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 441.

41. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 21.

42. Norris, *A History of Cataloguing and Cataloguing Methods.*

cataloging rules; the Ninety-one Rules was only one of fifteen cataloging codes generated in Great Britain, France, and the United States during this period.[43]

Anthony Panizzi has received most of the historical credit for the Ninety-one Rules, though at least four other librarians contributed to their creation.[44] A political refugee from Italy, Panizzi became an assistant librarian at the British Museum[45] in 1831. He became Keeper of the Printed Books (similar to chief librarian) in 1837 and was later knighted. When Panizzi joined the Museum, it lacked a complete and reliable catalog of its vast and nationally important library. Forceful and occasionally undiplomatic, Panizzi led the Museum's efforts to create the first cataloging code in the English-speaking world. His work helped make the Museum's collections far more accessible and established a standard for developing future cataloging codes.

The Ninety-one Rules (seventy-nine as originally presented by Panizzi and his fellow librarian advocates) sought to address long-term cataloging dilemmas. Instead of being grouped under "miscellaneous works," anonymous writings would now be entered under one of three possibilities: corporate author, when this information was available; material type, such as periodical, ephemera, or liturgy; or for the truly anonymous, "miscellaneous."[46] Panizzi also emphasized the title page as the primary authority for the

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43. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 442.

44. Norris, *A History of Cataloguing and Cataloguing Methods,* 78.

45. In the early 1970s, the library department of the British Museum merged with several other British repositories to become the British Library. British Library, "History of the British Library," http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/quickinfo/facts/history/index.html (accessed January 19, 2009).

46. Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 448.

catalog. For example, a work whose title page stated the author was anonymous, but whose name was in fact well known, would not be entered under the author name (though this name would be included after the title).[47]

Librarians continued to refine cataloging rules through the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth (and will likely continue to do so in the twenty-first). Nineteenth-century cataloging-code pioneers paid greater attention to patrons than previous catalogers did, and their questions often focused on patrons' actual needs rather than on what the librarian believed their needs should be.[48]

By the early twentieth century, the library catalog barely resembled the medieval inventory list that once served as a library's sole catalog. Monastic libraries in the Middle Ages had limited collections and scant need for sophisticated catalogs. The manuscript lists that served as early catalogs tended to do little more than name the books kept on each shelf; they would not help the reader seeking books by a certain writer or on a particular subject.

From the ninth through twelfth centuries, librarians began to organize their lists according to broad classification schemes, moving the lists more firmly into the realm of the library catalog. During the next few centuries, libraries expanded and grew outside ecclesiastical settings (in colleges and universities), strengthening the already existing need for better finding aids. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, book-focused

47. Strout, "The Development of the Catalog and Cataloging Codes," 21.

48. Many librarians throughout the 1800s and well into the 1900s continued to project their own expectations onto library patrons. One of the more condescending manifestations of this drive in the mid-1800s was "taste elevation theory," which ultimately sought to cultivate an interest in more "refined" literature.

scholars such as Tritheim, Gessner, and Treflerus attempted to address this need, creating

systematic, comprehensive bibliographies using principles – such as including lists

arranged by author names – that would be applied to library catalogs. Maunsell

introduced a practice that seems elementary today: alphabetizing author names by

surname rather than first name. Librarians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

focused on developing cataloging codes that could be applied to varied institutions,

leading to the French cataloging code of 1791 and the British Museum's Ninety-one

Rules.

As libraries grew both in number and size, librarians needed to revise their

increasingly meticulously compiled catalogs. The most carefully arranged catalog,

classified according to Gessner's scientific schemes and appended with an author and

title index, could relatively quickly become obsolete. Therefore, librarians sought the

ideal physical format, or outer form, while they devised and refined cataloging rules and

standards.

The Outer Form

The French cataloging code of 1791 was a historical milestone, the first national

effort to simplify and standardize library cataloging. However, its greater contribution

may have been to employ a type of card catalog on a wide scale for the first time. The

government's project had an immense scope – it sought both to give rudimentary training

to non-librarians across France and to have these newly minted catalogers compile a

bibliographic record for each of the Republic's thousands of newly acquired books and

manuscripts. While it is nearly impossible to accurately estimate how many items the

government confiscated, a contemporaneous report, from 1794, posited that the government's libraries and depots contained approximately ten million volumes, though a researcher seventy years later estimated that total at about 7.6 to 7.8 million.[49]

The instructions' brevity and clarity were only one strategic feature. In addition, the materials used in the cataloging project needed to be readily available, a relatively standard size, and capable of being interfiled.[50] One of the scholarly officials working on the nationwide cataloging project recommended that catalogers record bibliographical information on playing cards, with all cards being submitted to a "single depot where they will be sorted, placed in bibliographic divisions and subdivisions, and finally divided among different copyists whose united work will form the catalog."[51]

Catalogers were to first place a cardboard slip into the books, beginning at their left-hand bookcase and ending at their right-hand one, and starting with the number "1," assign a number to each title.[52] Books with more than one volume received only one number. These numbers functioned as accession numbers, though of course each repository started with "1." And by assigning a number to each title and recording this information, the catalog also served as a finding aid.

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49. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 378-404.

50. Ibid., 387.

51. Ibid., 384, quoting December 5, 1790 letter from Gaspard-Michel LeBlond, librarian of the Mazarin Library.

52. Cole, "An Early French 'General Catalog,'" 330.

In addition to the accession number, catalogers were to write the book's exact title and author, beginning a line or two below the top of the card.[53] Catalogers were also instructed to write the place, printer or publisher, date, and size; they had the option of adding, in "exceptional" cases, certain physical details, such as vellum or parchment, large paper, plates or illustrations, and similar details.[54]

Playing cards were ideal: one side was completely blank, as playing cards made in France were undecorated until 1816, when manufacturers were permitted to embellish them. Because they were made to be shuffled, playing cards were ideal for the cataloging project. They could be handled at length when the catalogers needed to alphabetize a stack of records.[55]

Catalogers were also urged to use cards with minimal "pips"[56] when recording works with especially long titles.[57] Such an approach would provide the greatest amount of space for a lengthy book record. Although the code tried to make card production as efficient and simple as possible, it required one practice that seems counterintuitive, at

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53. Cole, "An Early French 'General Catalog,'" 330.

54. Ibid.

55. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 378-404.

56. A pip is "a mark indicating the suit or numerical value of a playing card," such as the ace and deuce. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

57. Cole, "An Early French 'General Catalog,'" 330.

least to a card-catalog user. The rules required that entries be written across the top of the cards, rather than lengthwise, as with the card catalog.[58]

Uniform cards would also ease the gargantuan task of alphabetizing thousands of records. The cataloging instructions required each repository to alphabetize its cards by author name or, for anonymous works, by subject; ultimately, all cards collected through this national effort would be interfiled alphabetically. Each repository was instructed to use a needle and waxed thread to puncture the lower left-hand corner of each card and string a physically manageable packet of cards together. The catalogers would then pack the card packets inboxes lined with oilcloth and ship them to Paris.[59] After receiving a package, the "Bureau of Bibliography" first divided the cards into two groups, one comprising books with anonymous authors and a second comprising books with known authors. The Bureau then interfiled the cards alphabetically and transcribed the information onto sheets of paper.[60]

The cataloging project did not seek to establish a card catalog. In fact, at least one historian, J.B. Labiche, disdainfully noted that, years after the project, the cards consumed valuable storage space and were useful "only as material for a history of playing cards."[61] Labiche's comments presaged those of the librarians in Nicholson

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58. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 388.

59. Cole, "An Early French 'General Catalog,'" 329-331; and Brooks, "A History of the Card Catalog," 312.

60. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog."

61. Ibid., 391.

Baker's provocative essay, "Discards": thrilled to clear out card catalogs once OPACs became available, the librarians Baker interviewed seemed eager to erase any memory that the card catalog even existed.[62]

Rather than compile a card catalog, the endeavor intended to produce folio-sized book-form catalogs.[63] The cards were a tool, used to alphabetize and organize bibliographic entries so that the Bureau could create a book catalog. With moveable cards, the final catalogers could more easily prepare a final catalog that accurately presented book records arranged alphabetically by author or subject. A 1794 report estimated that repositories submitted about 1,200,000 cards, representing over three million volumes.

Their task was complicated by several repositories' failure to follow the rules. Some cut playing cards into strips to stretch their supplies and some created substitute cards because they lacked a sufficient source. Others wrote lengthwise across the cards instead of widthwise across the top, and still others completely ignored the instruction and submitted their bibliographic records in notebook form.[64]

In this regard, the French cataloging project was a large-scale version of a cataloging approach that had already been conducted at least a few times. An early catalog (pre-1775) of the Arsenal Library, now part of the Bibliothèque Nationale, was prepared using *fiches,* which could mean paper slips, cardboard, or possibly playing

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62. Nicholson Baker, "Discards."

63. Cole, "An Early French 'General Catalog,'" 331.

64. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 388.

cards.[65] In her biography of an Arsenal librarian, Hélène Dufresne[66] included

descriptions of the fiche method. The most intriguing description came from a visitor to

Paris in the 1720s; he described the catalog of the Fathers of the Oratory as being written

on "slips scarcely larger than playing cards."[67]

France was the site of another significant advance in cataloging formats. There,

the Abbé Rozier introduced the fiche technique in the introduction to an "index" for

publications issued by the Paris Academy of Sciences.[68] The index, published in 1775,

was printed on one side of each page so that purchasers could record future publications

on the blank side. He advised that an index be first made on cards (*cartes*) and when "a

sufficient number" of cards had been accumulated, the cards could be alphabetically

ordered and their contents transcribed onto the blank page.[69]

The Abbé was not the first to suggest this approach. Conrad Gessner wrote in

Pandectae that some readers who compiled indexes often used strips of paper to facilitate

the alphabetizing process. These readers created book indexes by

> writing down sentences on a sheet of paper while
> underlining or writing in capitals the catchwords,

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65. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 388.

66. Dufresne authored a biography of Huber-Pascal Ameilhon, an Arsenal librarian and key figure in creating the French cataloging code of 1791.

67. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 387.

68. Prosser, "The Origin of the Card Catalogue," 651. "Index" is the word assigned by a translator to the term Rozier used.

69. Ibid., 651.

and then cutting up the sheets into slips which may
either be pasted down in the required order on other
sheets or slipped into their places under threads on
specially prepared leaves.[70]

Here, Gessner noted that the paper-slip method was both a means to an end – a

book-form catalog – and *almost* an end in itself. The latter catalog type, with threads

securing the paper slips, may have offered the familiarity of the more common book-form

catalog while allowing the user to reorder slips as new titles were acquired.

This method resurfaced over 350 years later, when a "Miss Willock"

demonstrated a similar device at a (U.K.) Library Association meeting at Plymouth,

England in the early 1900s.[71] However, it is not clear which method the twentieth

century librarian used, as Gessner referenced two methods that used slips of paper.

Either Miss Willock pasted the slips onto larger sheets, the method most catalogers at the

time chose when using paper slips, or she placed the slips "under threads on specially

prepared leaves."

In the seventeenth century, at least one scholar, Leo Alattius, used paper slips to

prepare a catalog. A Vatican Library custodian, Alattius compiled a catalog for certain

manuscripts, and though he did not leave notes about his process, the physical catalog

makes his process evident. Alattius or another person apparently wrote entries on sheets

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70. Prideaux, "Library Economy in the Sixteenth Century," 161-62.

71. Ibid., 162.

of paper and then cut them into long, narrow strips, with each slip containing one entry. He then alphabetized the strips and pasted them onto the leaves of a large book.[72]

By suggesting that readers use paper slips or playing cards to prepare catalogs and indexes, Gessner, Rozier, and the French cataloging code drafters, along with practitioner Alattius, opened a path for the card and sheaf catalogs. They did not "invent" the card catalog, though Cole credited the French cataloging code with this achievement.[73] As noted earlier, these scholars saw the slips or cards as an ideal tool for creating bound, folio-sized (manuscript or typeset) ledgers.

At some point, someone decided to eliminate the final step and use the cards or slips themselves as a catalog. It is not clear when this occurred or who initiated it. Hopkins notes that two biographies of French scholar-librarians include descriptions of catalogs made from cards or slips,[74] but these references may be the catalogs' only appearance in the historical record. It also is not clear if the catalogs were intended for public use or solely for librarians.

A comment by a Swedish man visiting Paris in the 1720s may explain why these catalogs were so rare. The visitor noted that the catalog for the Fathers of the Oratory library was written on slips the size of playing cards, with at least fifteen titles listed on each slip. About fifty or sixty slips were then tied together to form a "fascicule" (Hopkins's term) or sheaf. The visitor may have been expressing a wider concern about

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72. Daly, *Contributions to a History of Alphabetization,* 86.

73. Cole, "An Early French 'General Catalog,'" 329.

74. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 387.

this cataloging method when he expressed his fear that "a current of air could jumble all the slips" if something as simple as the thread connecting the fascicules broke.[75] Like a hard drive crash, the jumble of slips would erase hours of work spent organizing a collection.

Another rare mention of an eighteenth-century "slip catalog"[76] involves the English explorer and botanist Sir Joseph Banks, who was sailing the globe acquiring botanical samples for the British Museum.[77] Daniel Solander, a Swedish immigrant, was hired in 1760 to catalog the Museum's growing natural history collection. Solander started a slip catalog, which he never completed, though his notes were used to create what the Museum called the Solander Slip Catalogue. The Solander Slip Catalog comprises hundreds of slips measuring 11 centimeters by 19 centimeters (4.33 inches by 7.5 inches).[78] While the slip catalog was later bound into 24 volumes, Solander had

75. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 387.

76. A "slip catalog" could be a sheaf catalog or card catalog, i.e., a library catalog composed of small pieces of paper or card stock. This term does not have a fixed definition in library cataloging.

77. Joseph Banks and Neil Chambers, *The Letters of Sir Joseph Banks: A Selection, 1768-1820* (London: Imperial College Press, 2000). The natural science collections became an independent museum, the Museum of Natural History, in 1963. "History and Architecture," Natural History Museum (U.K.), http://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit-us/history-architecture/index.html (accessed January 25, 2009).

78. Natural History Museum (U.K.), "Library Treasures," http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/collections/departmental-collections/museum-treasures/library/ (accessed January 25, 2009).

originally kept the slips in cases he built (a variation of which are now commonly called

"Solander cases")[79].

By the late 1700s, Edward Gibbon, the historian and writer, had decided that the

slip or card form would serve nicely as a library catalog.[80] Gibbon had amassed a

substantial scholarly library that helped him in writing *The Decline and Fall of the*

Roman Empire and other works at his homes in Lausanne, Switzerland and London,

England. To manage his Lausanne collection, Gibbon recorded information about his

books on over two thousand cards.[81] Four of these cards are held by Stanford University

Special Collections, which posits a likely creation date range of 1783 to 1789.[82] The

catalog cards could not have been made after 1794, as Gibbon died in that year.

Unlike the French catalogers, Gibbon used playing cards that were decorated on

one side; perhaps this was the only type available.[83] He entered information lengthwise,

so that his cards resemble records from modern card catalogs more strongly than do the

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79. Natural History Museum (U.K.), "Library Catalogue at the Natural History Museum: Catalog Record for Solander Slips MSS Vol. XIII, 2954-3296," http://library.nhm.ac.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/tKpaXzk5dz/GENERAL/181760006/60/502/X (accessed January 25, 2009).

80. Gibbon and Spencer were good friends and may have exchanged ideas about library cataloging techniques. Their friendship is discussed further in Chapter Three.

81. "Gibbon's Library: Some of Its Features and the Catalogue of It He Made Out of Playing Cards," *New York Times*, June 19, 1897.

82. Stanford University, "Stanford University Online Catalog: Record for Library Catalogue Cards, ca. 1783-1789, of Edward Gibbon," http://jenson.stanford.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi/H9PELfuxJU/GREEN/35240111/9 (accessed October 15, 2007).

83. At least in France, cards were not decorated until 1816. Hopkins, "The 1791 French Cataloging Code and the Origins of the Card Catalog," 388.

French cataloging cards. One card, now in the collection of the Houghton Library (which houses the Harvard College Libraries' special collections and archives) can be viewed online.[84]

Gibbon may also have attempted to create subject cross-reference cards, to organize his library according to subject.[85] While his reference cards are primitive compared to Spencer's, Gibbon's library was also much smaller and therefore he may not have needed an extensive cross-referencing system. Gibbon's friendship with Spencer is discussed in Chapter Three.

The next definitive appearance of the slip catalog occurs in approximately 1820, in London.[86] Sir Francis Ronalds, an early member of the Society of Telegraph Engineers, created what one writer described as "the card system" for his private library.[87] This may have been the first recognizable card catalog. Upon Ronalds's death in 1873, his library collection and the catalog passed to the Society, under "certain conditions, one being that the Society should bear the cost of printing the catalogue,

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84. Please see: http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/hydeblog/2007/12/02/the-luminous-historian-part-ii/. The finding aid for the Donald Hyde and Mary Hyde Eccles Autograph Collection, which contains the card, does not estimate a date range in which Gibbon could have created the card.

85. Geoffrey Keynes, ed. *The Library of Edward Gibbon: A Catalogue*, Edition Number 2 (Godalming [England]: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1980).

86. James, "The Progress of the Modern Card Catalog Principle," 56-63.

87. Alfred J. Frost, "The Ronalds' Library and Catalogue," *The Telegraphic Journal and Electrical Review* 6, no. 136 (October 1, 1878): 398.

which it had been the labour of the author's life to complete."[88] Alfred Frost postulated that Ronalds began the catalog as early as 1820.

Although James, Frost, and others have described Ronalds's catalog as the first modern card catalog,[89] this attribution may be misleading. Terminology regarding the physical format of library catalogs has varied, and the term "card catalog" may have referenced a different system in the late 1800s than it does today. For example, an article in the September-October 1885 *Library Journal* entitled "Note on the Card Catalogue of Leiden University" discusses a sheaf catalog, not a card catalog. In fact, the catalog described in the 1885 article was exhibited as a sheaf catalog at the 1883 World Fair. Confusing this matter further, James Duff Brown called the Leiden University catalog a "slip catalogue" in his 1907 treatise on library catalogs, though he considered the slip catalog a type of sheaf catalog.[90] In 1864, Edward Edwards described Spencer's catalog as a "slip catalog," as did an 1892 newspaper writer.[91] As mentioned above, the Solander Slip Catalogue was a collection of paper slips bound into 24 volumes.

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88. Alfred J. Frost, "The Ronalds' Library and Catalogue," 398. Charles Ammi Cutter defined the card catalog as one "made on separate pieces of cardboard . . . and kept in drawers, trays, books, or in any other way that will allow of indefinite intercalation without rewriting." Charles A. Cutter, *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog,* Edition Number 4 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904), 14.

89. Frost, "The Ronalds' Library and Catalogue," 398; and James, "The Progress of the Modern Card Catalog Principle," 58.

90. James Duff Brown, *Manual of Library Economy* (London: Library Supply Co., 1907), 261. Hanson and Daily describe the sheaf catalog as "slips mounted in a special book." Hanson and Daily, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 432.

91. A Correspondent, "Althorp and Its Library," *The (London) Times,* August 8, 1892; and Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries.*

From the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, both the sheaf and

card catalogs begin appearing more frequently and on both sides of the Atlantic. By the

mid- to late-1820s or early 1830s, they were "rather the rule" in Irish libraries "than the

exception."[92] Minnie Stewart Rhodes James wrote that Trinity College in Dublin had

used a card catalog since 1827.[93] James calculated this date based on E.P. Wright's

assertion in 1877 that "[s]ome of the slips in the Trinity College public library are nearly

half a century old."[94]

In the United States, preeminent librarian Charles Coffin Jewett adopted the card

catalog for the Boston Public Library between 1853 and 1855.[95] The Harvard College

library began compiling its card catalog in late October 1861.[96] In fact, Harvard

librarians were creating two catalogs, one an alphabetical catalog of author names and

titles of anonymous works, and a second, classed catalog.

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92. Comment by E.P. Wright recorded in "Discussions and Proceedings of the Conference, October 2, 3, 4, and 5, 1877, Including the Constitution of the Library Association of the United Kingdom, as Adopted October 5, 1877," in *Transactions and Proceedings of the Conference of Librarians Held in London 1877*, ed. Edward Nicholson and Henry Tedder (London: Chiswick Press, 1878), 156.

93. James, "The Progress of the Modern Card Catalog Principle," 56-63.

94. Comment by E.P. Wright recorded in "Discussions and Proceedings of the Conference," 156; James, "The Progress of the Modern Card Catalog Principle," 58.

95. James, "The Progress of the Modern Card Catalog Principle," 58.

96. Ezra Abbot, "The New Catalogues of the College Library," in *The Catalog and Cataloging*, ed. Arthur Ray Rowland ([Hamden, CT]: Shoe String Press, 1969), 33-40. (Originally published in the 1863 Harvard College Annual Report.)

In 1871, the library of Leiden (sometimes spelled "Leyden") University

introduced what some librarians called the first sheaf catalog.[97] Assuming that Spencer's

catalog was created at the very latest in 1818, his system preceded the widely hailed

Leiden sheaf catalog by at least fifty-three years.[98] It appears that no librarians involved

in developing the sheaf catalog had read a description of Spencer's catalog that appeared

in 1864.[99] This circumstance is unsurprising, as Edwards, the book's author, devoted far

more attention to Spencer's grand and storied collection than to his unique library

catalog.[100]

In the 1870s, W. N. Du Rieu was director of the library of Leiden University, the

oldest university in the Netherlands. Du Rieu, a well-regarded scholar, described his

library catalog to American librarians in a letter read at the 1885 American Library

Association conference at Lake George, New York.[101] The "Leyden," as some librarians

took to calling the form of Du Rieu's catalog, was comprised of hundreds of booklets (or

sheaves) bound with wooden boards. Each sheaf contained 150 to 200 thick paper cards,

each with a notch at the top and bottom left-hand-side; the wooden boards were notched

97. Stewart, *The Sheaf Catalogue: A Practical Handbook on the Compilation of Manuscript Catalogues for Public and Private Libraries*; David Batty, "The Sheaf Catalog," in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, ed. Allen Kent, Harold Lancour, and Jay E. Daily, Vol. 27 (New York: M. Dekker, 1968), 312-18.

98. The possible time period that Spencer's catalog spans is discussed in Chapter Four.

99. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries.*

100. See ibid., 422.

101. W. N. Du Rieu, "Note on the Card Catalogue of Leiden University," *Library Journal* 10, no. 9-10 (September-October 1885): 205-8.

in the same location. A cord, tied at the notches, joined the front and back sheaf covers, and a parchment spine provided additional binding strength.[102] Figure 2.1., from Brown's treatise on cataloging, reproduces an illustration of the Leyden sheaf.
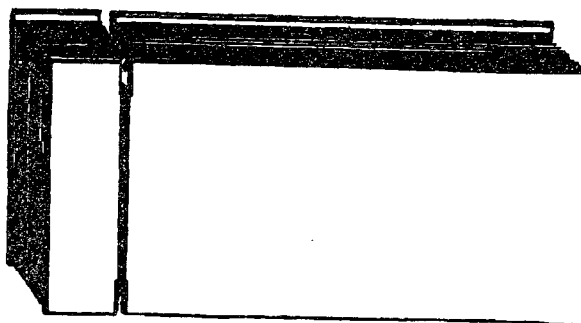
FIG. 98.—Leyden Slip Holder (Section 300).

Figure 2.1. Illustration from Brown's Manual of Library Economy.[103] **Image courtesy of Google Books.**

The Leiden University Library had five sheaf catalogs. One listed each item's location, a second was for library administration, a third classified catalogue for librarians' use, a fourth was an alphabetical catalog for the public, and a fifth was a classified catalog for public use.[104] To make five copies of each record, the library printed each title five times on a thin leaf of paper. The leaves were then cut up and pasted on stiffer paper.

The Leyden was sufficiently appealing in 1893 to merit inclusion in the ALA exhibit at that year's World's Fair. The exhibit included examples of the sheaf catalog,

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102. W. N. Du Rieu, "Note on the Card Catalogue of Leiden University," 207.

103. Brown, *Manual of Library Economy*, 261.

104. Du Rieu, "Note on the Card Catalogue of Leiden University," 207. Du Rieu appeared to have written the letter in (slightly awkward) English, so that it would not need to be translated.

which Katherine Sharp described as a "book form of the slip catalog."[105]   Ms. Sharp, a

leading library science educator who later directed one of the first library schools in the

United States, wrote that the exhibit showed sheaf catalogs from Leiden University,

Harvard College, and the Marucellian Library in Florence. She credited the "progressive

sub-librarian, Mme. Giulia Sacconi-Ricci" with the catalog form's invention.[106] In the

turbulent world of library catalog innovation, the "Sacconi" had already supplanted the

Leyden, which librarians eventually considered too time-consuming to prepare and too

delicate for heavy public use.[107]

During the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, the card and sheaf

catalog formats dominated library cataloging. Despite the formats' popularity, their

respective sizes were not standardized; variations on each type rivaled each other for

supremacy. The ALA introduced recommendations for the card catalog, suggesting that

libraries use cards that measured 7.5 cm by 12.5 cm; however, this size did not become

the standard until the early 1900s, when the Library of Congress began distributing

completed cards through its Card Division.[108] Melvil Dewey's Library Bureau, which

sold card catalog furniture and card-making supplies (a troubling conflict of interest for a

librarian who also played a principal role in determining cataloging standards) also

helped to eliminate competitive card catalog formats.

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105. Katherine L. Sharp, "The A. L. A. Library Exhibit at the World's Fair," *Library Journal* 18, no. 8 (August 1893): 282.

106. Ibid., 282.

107. Brown, *Manual of Library Economy.*

108. James, "The Progress of the Modern Card Catalog Principle," 56-63.

The sheaf catalog resisted librarians' efforts to standardize the format. According to Brown, the sheaf catalog came in several formats; therefore, there were several inventors and no single standard. Brown named Sacconi-Ricci as the inventor of a particular type of sheaf catalog, but he also described the Leyden, Staderini, adjustable, and an unnamed type.[109] (He did not mention the Spencer catalog.) Sheaf catalog forms that were developed after the Leyden was introduced were more "mechanical," having bolts, screws, and other binding hardware.[110] In contrast, bibliographic records in a Leyden-type sheaf catalog were bound between wooden boards that were tied with heavy cord.[111]

Spencer's resembles the Leyden most closely. While Spencer's sheaf catalog used a simpler binding style, in which paper slips were bound with string and vellum-backed cardboard rather than steel posts and wooden boards, his sheaf catalog was appropriate for a private library. Far fewer readers used Spencer's catalog, and therefore cardboard covers were durable enough for this relatively light use. In addition, Spencer acquired books more slowly than a university library and it was therefore not essential that his catalog be easily updated.

Some librarians preferred the sheaf catalog to the card catalog because a single patron could monopolize the card catalog; in contrast, a patron searching for a title could remove the booklet or sheaf containing possibly relevant records and leave the ones he or

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109. Brown, *Manual of Library Economy*.

110. Ibid.

111. Du Rieu, "Note on the Card Catalogue of Leiden University," 207.

she didn't need.[112] Because it resembled a book, the sheaf catalog appealed to some

librarians who continued to prefer the book catalog.[113] Sheaf catalogs did not need

specially built furniture and they occupied less space than a card catalog.[114]

Sheaf catalogs were especially popular in Britain, where some academic and

public libraries used them until recently. For example, the library at Durham University,

in northern England, used a sheaf catalog form for two of Durhan's early printed book

collections, decommissioning these catalogs only in 2004.[115] In the mid-1960s, Durham

University converted its science library card catalog into sheaf format because the "Xerox

914" copier could reproduce the thinner slips used in sheaf catalogs but not the thicker

cards used in card catalogs; the copier allowed Durham to create duplicate records for its

main and science catalogs.[116] The Liverpool Central (Public) Library used a sheaf

catalog so large that it "stretched around the wall seemingly to infinity."[117] The

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112. Sharp, "The A. L. A. Library Exhibit at the World's Fair," 284.

113. Bowman, "The Decline of the Printed Catalogue in Britain," 89.

114. Stewart, *The Sheaf Catalogue,* 1.

115. Sheila Hingley, "The British Library Co-operation and Partnership Programme Full Disclosure, 2003-2004: Final Report," Durham University Library, www.bl.uk/aboutus/acrossuk/worknat/full/Projects/winterbottom/winterbottomfinalreportbl.pdf (accessed March 11, 2008).

116. N. W. Guilding, "The Use of the Xerox 914 for the Reproduction of Sheaf Catalog Entries," *Journal of Documentation* 20, no. 4 (December 1964): 209.

117. Eric Hunter, "The Man with the Oily Rag Meets the Millennium: The Life and Times of CIG," *Catalogue & Index,* no. 134 (Winter 1999): "Introduction," http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/results/results_single_fulltext.jhtml;hwwilsonid=DFXCA4 2RJGEAHQA3DIMSFGOADUNGIIV0 (accessed February 2, 2008).

Liverpool sheaf catalog was closed in 1990 but was incorporated into a series of artist books by David Bunn in 1999.[118]

Some American librarians preferred the sheaf catalog, particularly in its late-nineteenth century mechanical form. Horace Kephart, Librarian at the St. Louis Mercantile Library, wrote approvingly of Giulia Sacconi-Ricci's sheaf catalog invention, as it was superior to the card catalog system. It was cheaper to produce bibliographical slips for the "Sacconi-Ricci" than for a card catalog; elderly readers could use the Sacconi-Ricci more easily; and a librarian could relatively simply and quickly create a new sheaf to accommodate a filled one, among other advantages.[119]

Despite the sheaf catalog's appeal, many U.K. librarians encouraged their fellow professionals to use card catalogs instead. L. Stanley Jast, Chief Librarian of the Croydon (England) Public Libraries, wrote that he favored the sheaf catalog for its familiar, book-type format. However, Jast urged libraries to adopt the card catalog as it was easier to use – it stayed open more readily and the user could thumb through it more quickly than the sheaf catalog.[120]

Even though library associations and many librarians in the United States and Great Britain advocated for the card or sheaf catalog, some librarians strongly preferred the printed, book-form catalog (known more succinctly as a "printed catalog"). This

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118. B. J. Kish Irvine, "Major Gifts to Fine Arts Library," *IUL (Indiana University Libraries) News* 25, no. 24 (June 22, 1998) (accessed October 21, 2008).

119. Horace Kephart, "The Sacconi Binder," *The Library Journal* 18, no. 6 (June 1893): 184.

120. Jast, *The Sheaf and Card Catalogues,* 129.

format appealed to librarians who believed the card and sheaf catalogs were vulnerable to theft, vandalism, or damage from overuse. Others assumed that readers preferred to use printed catalogs.

Printed catalogs also had legitimate advantages that partially justified their continued use. For example, they consumed less of a library's floor space and did not require specially built cabinets.[121] Readers could buy or borrow a copy of a library's printed catalog to see if the library held books they wished to borrow; many librarians also felt that the printed catalog provided a more accurate sense of a library's holdings than a card catalog did.[122]

In fact, the printed catalog format has been so attractive that many libraries, including Harvard University's Lamont Library, the New York State Library in Albany, and the King County Library in Seattle, turned to this format in the mid-twentieth century.[123] By this time, the card catalogs for most large libraries were becoming unwieldy, as collections grew larger and more quickly. Libraries used the printed catalogs to supplement the card catalogs and create a search tool that facilitated browsing. Yet at least one doctoral candidate – in 1965 – believed that the New York Public Library

121. Bowman, "The Decline of the Printed Catalogue in Britain," 67-99.

122. Ibid.

123. Jesse H. Shera, "The Book Catalog and the Scholar -- A Reexamination of an Old Partnership," in *The Catalog and Cataloging,* ed. Arthur Ray Rowland ([Hamden, CT]: Shoe String Press, 1969), 114. (Originally presented at the RTSD/RSD Book Catalogs Interdivisional Committee Program during the Cleveland Conference of the American Library Association, July 10, 1961.)

would improve by abandoning its card catalogs and returning to the printed catalog.[124] This doctoral candidate, Seoud Matta, estimated that more than two million of the NYPL's eight million cards needed rehabilitation; he believed it would be cheaper to convert the cards into book catalogs and maintain the book catalogs than to maintain the NYPL's already existing card catalog.

By the mid-1900s, the card catalog was nearly ubiquitous in U.S. and international libraries, having conquered rival formats. It might seem that it was the card catalog's manifest destiny to serve libraries in the twentieth century, though a brief review of the late 1800s demonstrates that many other forms challenged the card catalog for supremacy. And while many non-librarians stereotype librarians as staid, quiet, and unassuming, the library-cataloging field in the late 1800s was virtually frenzied with librarians competing to devise the ideal catalog format.

Despite the centuries spent devising the ideal physical cataloging format, librarians would soon abandon printed, card, and sheaf catalogs for electronic formats that would become online public access catalogs. A librarian might feel a little wistful reflecting that the card catalog, which took at least 350 years to perfect, didn't survive the twentieth century.

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124. Seoud Makram Matta, "The Card Catalog in a Large Research Library: Present Condition and Future Possibilities in the New York Public Library" (DLS dissertation, Columbia University, 1965), 1, quoted in Maurice F. Tauber and Hilda Feinberg, *Book Catalogs* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1971), 13.

The Contribution of Spencer's Sheaf Catalog to Library History

Spencer's sheaf catalog enjoys a unique place in the history of library catalogs: until the late 1800s, no other library had a catalog like Spencer's. While the French cataloging code of 1791 led to what may have been the first "card catalog," its creators intended the catalog to serve as a large-scale inventory; it did not help connect readers with books or manuscripts. Spencer's sheaf catalog, on the contrary, may have been the first compact library catalog intended to help a reader find books.

In terms of format, Spencer's resembles the Leyden most closely, though it predated the latter catalog by possibly eighty years. While Spencer's sheaf catalog used a simpler binding style, in which paper slips were bound with string and vellum-backed cardboard rather than tooled wooden boards, his sheaf catalog was appropriate for a private library. Far fewer readers used Spencer's catalog, and therefore cardboard covers were durable enough for this relatively light use. In addition, Spencer acquired books more slowly than a university library and it was therefore not essential that his catalog be easily updated.

While Spencer's sheaf catalogs were likely discontinued in the early to mid-1800s, reviewing cataloging developments during the nineteenth century helps illustrate how advanced his catalogs were. Well before the British Museum had a reliable, accurate catalog of its collections, Spencer enjoyed what likely was superior access to a comparatively rich and expansive collection. The following chapter discusses Spencer's collection and his interests and influences in greater detail.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SECOND EARL SPENCER, HIS LIBRARY,
AND ITS LEGACY

A Highly Functional Bibliomaniac: An Introduction to George John Spencer

George John Spencer's book collecting acumen and his library helped to define an

era. Book collecting was already firmly established, the printing press having been in

operation for three hundred years. However, when Spencer began to amass his storied

library in the late eighteenth century, collectors had only recently begun to value and seek

old – i.e., antiquarian – books. Spencer's collecting interests reflected this shift.

Spencer's sheaf catalogs distinguish the eminent book collector from his peers.

His systematic approach to organizing his collection intimated that Spencer had more in

common with institutional libraries than with private collectors. The sheaf catalogs

resemble the novel organizational strategies being developed by librarians and their

cohorts, bibliographers seeking to manage the copious number of works – and knowledge

– being produced. Spencer's library catalog incorporated the most advanced technology

then available; his library was thus a store of knowledge and not solely a collection of

treasured and valuable books.

The Bibliomania

Spencer's most active book collecting years coincided with – and undoubtedly

fueled – the frenetic period in book history that Thomas Frognall Dibdin called "the

bibliomania." This period began and ended in the first wave of the eighteenth century,

when affluent European men (and a few women) turned their acquisitive attentions to

rare and early books and manuscripts.[1] While Dibdin is credited with popularizing the

term "bibliomania,"[2] he wrote with such breathless passion for books that he helped

publicize, literally and figuratively, the concept of bibliomania.

As noted above, by the eighteenth century book collecting was a well-established

activity. Printing businesses had spread across Europe, amply supplying avid book

collectors and ensuring the creation of new collectors. However, most collectors favored

recently printed copies and shunned antiquarian books. Jean Grolier, the sixteenth-

century collector renown for generously sharing his library with friends as well as for

binding his books in elaborate and luxurious patterns, collected mainly

contemporaneously printed books.[3] Samuel Pepys, the seventeenth-century British

diarist and bibliophile, routinely discarded older editions once he obtained more recently

printed versions.[4]

Spencer typified the new book collector of the bibliomania era. Wealthy, erudite,

and focused, he sought books printed the first fifty years of the printing press's invention,

also known as the incunable period, which ran from the mid-1400s to 1500. He also

valued first editions, particularly of the Latin and Greek classics and late medieval poets

like Petrarch and Boccaccio.

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1. Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness*, 25; Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts*, 71.

2. Holzenberg, "Book Collecting."

3. Ibid., under "Early development: Sociopolitical Influences."

4. Ibid.

Like Pepys, Spencer replaced earlier-acquired books with ones he obtained later; however, he did so because the latter were more "desirable."[5] While Spencer worked diligently to obtain books his library lacked, he also sought to improve his existing collection by replacing "inferior" books with those that were, for example, perfectly collated,[6] lacked marginalia,[7] or belonged to a famous collector.

Bibliomania reached an early peak in 1812, when the collection of John Ker, the third Duke of Roxburghe, was auctioned.[8] At the Roxburghe auction, Spencer battled with the Duke of Devonshire and the Marquis of Blandford for what was considered to be the only remaining, perfect copy of the early printer Christopher Valdarfer's 1470 printing of Boccaccio's *Il decamerone* (the Valdarfer Boccaccio). Adding to the suspense and intrigue, the Duke of Devonshire, William Cavendish, was married to George John's popular older sister Georgiana, while the Marquis of Blandford, George Spencer, was a cousin of George John, the second Earl Spencer.

Blandford prevailed, earning the right to buy the rare book for £2,260;[9] Spencer's final bid had been £2,250.[10] As Dibdin described the auction, the room was hushed and

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5. Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts*, 77.

6. A perfectly collated book has all the original pages in the original locations as produced by the book's printer.

7. Marginalia are notes written in a book's margins by readers.

8. Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness*, 114-15.

9. In June 1812, £2,260 was worth approximately $11,300. "Books," in *Harper's Book of Facts: A Classified History of the World Embracing Science, Literature, and Art*, ed. Charlton Thomas Lewis (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1895), 111.

10. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries*, 406-7.

no one breathed as the bidding reached a monetary level never seen before.[11] It was

estimated that the Duke of Roxburghe had spent about £5,000 amassing his collection;

bibliomania had inflated his collection's value so dramatically that the auction grossed

over £23,300.[12]

However, Blandford did not own the Valdarfer for very long. Only seven years

later, Spencer bought it for substantially less than the sale price of £2,250, when the

Marquis's financial straits forced him to sell.[13] Spencer's purchase price equaled

approximately $4,590,[14] a high sum but less than one-half the price Blandford paid.

The extravagant price and heated bidding for the Valdarfer inspired Spencer and

Dibdin to form the Roxburghe Club, an association devoted to republishing rare works of

early British literature.[15] Highlights of these efforts include reprinting, thanks to Spencer,

the only perfect copy known of an English translation of Ovid's *De tristibus*.[16] While the

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11. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *The Bibliographical Decameron: Or, Ten Days Pleasant Discourse upon Illuminated Manuscripts, and Subjects Connected with Early Engraving, Typography, and Bibliography* (London: W. Bulmer, Shakespeare Press, 1817), iii.

12. "The Roxburghe Sale," *The Gentleman's Magazine: An Historical Chronicle* 82 (July 1812): 113.

13. On page 78 of *English Collectors of Books and Manuscripts,* Seymour de Ricci wrote that Spencer paid £918 for the Valdarfer Boccaccio; according to Charles Bruce, the price was £750. Bruce, "The Althorp Library (Part I)," 6.

14. "[Earl Spencer's Library]," *The (Baltimore) Sun,* January 8, 1890.

15. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 413-18.

16. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* 424-25.

Roxburghe Club also produced several "frivolities," it made otherwise inaccessible texts available to scholars and readers.[17]

Any discussion of bibliomania would be incomplete without some description of Dibdin. Considered "England's most enthusiastic bibliographer,"[18] Dibdin devoted years to producing the extravagantly detailed and exquisitely printed seven-volume library catalog that helped make Spencer's library famous. This set comprises the four-volume *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*,[19] which focused on the continental and British incunables Spencer kept at the Spencer House libraries; the two-volume *Aedes Althorpianae*,[20] a lengthy description of Spencer's books, paintings, and other works housed as Althorp; and the one-volume catalog of the Duke of Cassano-Serra's collection.[21] The catalogs are collectively referred to as the seven-volume *Bibliotheca Spenceriana:* the first four volumes are Volumes 1 through 4, while Volume 1 and 2 of

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17. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries*, 424-25.

18. Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts*, 75.

19. The full title is *Bibliotheca Spenceriana or, a Descriptive Catalogue of the Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century, and of Many Valuable First Editions, in the Library of George John Earl Spencer, K.G. &c. &c. &c.*

20. The full title is *Aedes Althorpianae, or, an Account of the Mansion, Books, and Pictures, at Althorp: the Residence of George John Earl Spencer, K.G.; to Which Is Added a Supplement to the Bibliotheca Spenceriana.*

21. The full title is *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century Lately Forming Part of the Library of the Duke di Cassano Serra, and Now the Property of George John Earl Spencer, with a General Index of Authors and Editions Contained in the Present Volume, and in the Bibliotheca Spenceriana and Aedes Althorpianae.*

the *Aedes Althorpianae* are Volumes 5 and 6 respectively and the Duke of Cassano-Serra collection catalog is Volume 7.[22]

Dibdin produced several other bibliographically related books from 1800 until his death in 1847.[23] However, almost all of these literary ventures strained Dibdin's finances; unlike Spencer and the high-born book collectors he sought to befriend, Dibdin was not independently wealthy. He derived his main (and often only) income from his service to the Anglican Church, having been ordained as a priest in early 1805.[24] Spencer had tried to help Dibdin realize some financial stability by securing him a rectorship in Marylebone in 1823 and position as vicar of Exning, Suffolk later that year.

Dibdin's bibliographical work also jeopardized his family's financial welfare. Dibdin had met and married his wife, Sophia, during his studies at Oxford University from 1793 to 1797; he left before formally earning his degree, though he obtained his degree a few years later. They eventually had two daughters and two sons.[25] However, Dibdin continuously worried about money and his correspondence and books describe his perpetual financial difficulties. Dibdin had good reason to worry, as in 1836 he avoided

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22. Dibdin himself referred to his *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* as a seven-volume set, numbering each volume chronologically as described above. Dibdin, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana,* Vol. 7, 211.

23. David A. Stoker, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin," in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* ed. William Baker and Kenneth Womack, Vol. 184 (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1997), 69-80 (accessed March 15, 2008).

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

being arrested for debts only by fleeing London.[26] While Spencer's correspondence often reflects impatience with Dibdin's poor money skills, he insured Dibdin's life in the amount of £1,000, for his wife and daughter's benefit (his sons and one daughter predeceased Dibdin).[27]

While Spencer funded most if not all of the printing costs for the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, Dibdin did not earn a salary for his work.[28] His financial arrangement with Spencer allowed Dibdin to retain whatever profit remained after repaying Spencer for the financial outlay. However, Dibdin's tendency to drive the printing budget upwards by including multiple illustrations and fascimiles, having text printed in red and blue, and making multiple corrections to the printer's proofs, guaranteed that Dibdin would realize little if any profit from the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*.

Despite these fundamental, pressing problems, Dibdin managed to produce exuberant, detailed, and finely illustrated books on book collections and collecting and helped establish a high standard for catalogs of private libraries and bibliography in general. He also acted as an agent for Spencer and other book collectors, often earning a commission for selling or buying books.[29]

Dibdin's view of bibliomania – as an obsession with constructive and useful side effects – finds support in Spencer's collecting activities and book interests. By building

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26. Stoker, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin."

27. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors.*

28. Lister, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1776-1847, and 'the Bibliomania,'" Chapter 9, 3.

29. Stoker, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin."

an extensive, scholarly library, Spencer helped strengthen British cultural ideals.[30] Even

though his library included books by authors and printers outside England, Scotland, and

Wales, Spencer had created something like a private national institution. And when his

library became the primary part of a Manchester public institution, the John Rylands

Memorial Library, Spencer's cultural contributions were celebrated internationally.[31]

However, many Britons disparaged bibliomania. In their view, bibliomania was

destructive and anti-intellectual, with bibliomaniacs acting as empty-headed materialists

and not thinking men:

> Their rage was to estimate books not according to their intrinsic
> worth, but for their rarity. Hence any volume of trash, which was
> scarce merely because it never had any sale, fetched fifty or a
> hundred pounds; but if it were only one out of two or three known
> copies, no limits could be set to the price.[32]

Edward Walford included the above remark in a multi-volume history of London,

in which he bitingly described the Roxburghe Club's members: "several noblemen, who,

we are told, in other respects, were esteemed men of sense."[33] Negative comments, snide

and serious, were common regarding bibliomania. Writers concerned that these opinions

might tarnish Spencer's reputation hastened to distinguish Spencer from Dibdin, usually

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30. See Philip Connell, "Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics, and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain," *Representations*, no. 71 (Summer 2000), 24, http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/stable/2902924 (accessed February 20, 2008).

31. See "Althorp and Its Library," 7; and "Famous among Libraries: The Almost Priceless Gift of Mrs. Rylands," *New York Times,* August 14, 1892.

32. Edward Walford, *Old and New London,* Vol. 4 (London: Cassell, Petter, & Galpin, 1878), Chapter XV. "St. James's Square and Its Distinguished Residents" (accessed Novemer 6, 2008).

33. Ibid., Chapter XV. "St. James's Square and Its Distinguished Residents."

by castigating Dibdin's lower social status.[34]   Other writers sought to distinguish Spencer

from un-intellectual collectors. Philip Connell wrote that, while many collectors may

have been "more interested in *looking* at their books than in actually reading them,"

Spencer read and shared his books.[35]

Dibdin's role as self-appointed chronicler of bibliomania did not help the era's

reputation. Most writers dismissed Dibdin's books and ridiculed him for his pomposity,

verbosity, and errors, while a few begrudgingly respected Dibdin's contributions to

bibliography. Edwards wrote disdainfully of Dibdin's "[w]ant of method, fantastic

raptures about trifles, indiscriminate emphasis, inattention to minute accuracy, petty but

provoking affectations in style, and wearisome repetitions of pointless anecdotes."[36]

More recent writers, such as Nicholas Basbanes, have treated Dibdin more kindly,

recognizing his faults while thanking him for helping to revive interest in the literary

classics and for setting high expectations for bibliography.[37] Even Edwards credited

Dibdin with helping establish Spencer's reputation as a famed book collector as well as

for making "the paths smoother for all future labourers in the rugged bibliographic

field."[38]

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34. Michael Kerney, "George John Earl Spencer, 1758-1834," in *Contributions towards a Dictionary of English Book-Collectors: As Also of Some Foreign Collectors Whose Libraries Were Incorporated in English Collections or Whose Books Are Chiefly Met with in England,* ed. Bernard Quaritch (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1892), 2.

35. Connell, "Bibliomania."

36. Ibid., 418.

37. Stoker, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin," 69-80; Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness,* 114.

38. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* 419.

By 1832, when Dibdin wrote *Bibliophobia: Remarks on the Present Languid and Depressed State of Literature and the Book Trade,* the antiquarian book market had become flooded with books.[39] And whereas the Roxburghe sale marked the beginning of bibliomania's peak, the auction of Richard Heber's collection beginning in 1834 was its nadir. Heber had been a bibliophile since childhood and had amassed a collection that rivaled Spencer's; his collection was so extensive that it took five years to sell his library at auction. Even though Heber spent well over £100,000, the sales of his collection generated only £56,744.[40] For the moment, the market frenzy had ebbed.

<u>Spencer's Friendships with Literary Figures</u>

Spencer and Dibdin

Spencer and Dibdin began their life-long friendship no later than 1802, when Dibdin sent Spencer a "Bibliographical work [Dibdin had] lately published."[41] This work was *Introduction to the Knowledge of Editions of Rare and Valuable Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics,* which Dibdin had published in 1802.[42] While the two exchanged letters sporadically for several years, early in their correspondence Spencer

39. See Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Bibliophobia: Remarks on the Present Languid and Depressed State of Literature and the Book Trade; in a Letter Addressed to the Author of the Bibliomania* (London: Henry Bohn, 1832).

40. Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness.*

41. George John Spencer to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, July 1802, in Letters of George John, 2nd Earl Spencer, to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, Spencer Eng MS 71, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

42. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *An Introduction to the Knowledge of Rare and Valuable Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics: Being, in Part, a Tabulated Arrangement from Dr. Harwood's View, &c.: With Notes from Mattaire, De Bure, Dictionnaire Bibliographique, and References to Ancient and Modern Catalogues* (London: Payne, 1802).

had invited Dibdin to visit Spencer House whenever Spencer or his librarian, Tommaso de Ocheda, were there.[43] However, Dibdin may not have visited Spencer House until 1811, and he did not visit Althorp until that year.

By 1810 the men's familiarity had grown, evidenced by their increased correspondence. Beginning no later than 1811, Dibdin was a regular and often long-term visitor to Spencer House and Althorp. That year Dibdin had gained Spencer's approval to write a short book focusing on "rarities" in the Earl's collection, kept at Spencer House. This work, *Book Rarities,*[44] began a long-lived relationship both between Dibdin and Spencer and Dibdin and the William Bulmer, an esteemed printer. Bulmer printed only thirty-six copies of this work, most likely because Dibdin considered the book a "specimen"; it is brief, containing only twelve book descriptions and several illustrations. Dibdin hoped the book would convince other collectors to open their libraries to him, so that he could then produce detailed catalogs of these libraries.[45]

Dibdin's efforts succeeded in capturing Spencer's attention and the Earl soon agreed to Dibdin's proposal to publish a lengthy catalog of the Spencer House collection. In early 1812, Dibdin began working on Volume 1 of the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana,* writing at a desk set up in an unused nursery at Spencer House. London at the time retained a rural quality; during the day, Dibdin could glance out the window and see

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43. George John Spencer to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, June 5, 1803, in Letters of George John, 2nd Earl Spencer, to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, Spencer Eng MS 71, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

44. See Dibdin, *Book Rarities.*

45. Ibid.

cattle grazing.[46] By evening, the cattle were replaced by an even larger number of people.

Dibdin wrote in his books and letters that studying and documenting Spencer's collection was deeply fulfilling. Despite these declarations, Dibdin actually coveted a position as Spencer's librarian. Spencer declined Dibdin's entreaties, but maintained their friendship in other regards. Dibdin advised Spencer in the latter's book purchases, often traveling to examine and negotiate potential purchases. He produced the seven-volume *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* and co-founded the Roxburghe Club, acting as an officer along with Spencer. Dibdin also corresponded frequently with Spencer and more unusually, due to their vastly different social positions, socialized with Spencer, spending New Year's Eve at Althorp often in the years after 1811.[47]

Dibdin continued to hope Spencer would hire him as the Earl's librarian, a hope he shared with Spencer. Yet Dibdin undermined his own proposal; he explained that his other activities would prevent him from fully meeting the position's responsibilities, and that Spencer would therefore need to hire an assistant.[48] Unsurprisingly, the closest Dibdin came to serving as Spencer's librarian was to describe himself as "Librarian to His Lordship" on the title pages of the *Aedes Althorpianae* and the Duke of Cassano-

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46. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life, with Anecdotes of Books, and Book Collectors,* Vol. 1 (London: John Major, 1836), 494-496.

47. Lister, "George John, 2nd Earl Spencer and His 'Librarian,'" 95. It is not clear if Dibdin's wife and children accompanied him.

48. Lister, "George John, 2nd Earl Spencer and His 'Librarian,'" 114.

Serra catalog.[49] Instead of hiring Dibdin, Spencer employed others to manage the books he had acquired, to escort visitors around the library, and almost certainly to create and maintain the sheaf catalog.

Dibdin's relationship with Spencer and his erroneous reputation as Spencer's librarian suggest that he may have been instrumental or at least involved in creating or maintaining Spencer's sheaf catalogs. However, it is unlikely Dibdin had any role in the sheaf catalogs. Dibdin worked in Spencer's library infrequently and usually in the Spencer House libraries, where the "fifteeners" (incunabula), Caxtons, and other notable books were kept. Dibdin did not even have free access to Spencer's library cases and had to ask permission to use the collection.[50] Finally, Dibdin did not catalog Spencer's expansive collection, though some writers have referred to the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* as a library catalog.[51] The *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* is a bibliographical study – albeit a lengthy one – highlighting Spencer's incunables, notable books, and manuscripts; it is not a book-by-book description of Spencer's libraries.

It is also almost certain that, were he involved with the sheaf catalog, Dibdin would have eagerly and frequently mentioned such work. Dibdin's books demonstrate a pronounced inclination to include extensive discussions about Spencer, his library, and their relationship. For example, in *Reminiscences of a Literary Life,* Dibdin devoted a seventy-four page chapter to the Spencer library and a forty-two page chapter to Althorp;

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49. These works were volumes five through seven, respectively, of the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana,* printed 1822-1823.

50. Lister, "George John, 2nd Earl Spencer and His 'Librarian,'" 114.

51. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer."

he also boastfully described several book purchases he made for Spencer and quoted

lengthy passages from letters Spencer wrote Dibdin.[52] He mentioned dozens of books in

Spencer's collection in *Typographical Antiquities: An Historical Account of Printing in

England*, thereby suggesting a unique intimacy with Spencer's fabled library.[53]

Many of Dibdin's other bibliographically themed books similarly celebrate

Dibdin's connection to Spencer. Given this propensity, had Dibdin been involved with

Spencer's sheaf catalog, he would have proudly amplified any contributions. Indeed,

Dibdin's only reference to Spencer's cataloging system is to note the accession numbers

of two volumes of miscellaneous tracts that he described in the *Aedes*.[54]

Spencer and Gibbon

Edward Gibbon, the historian and writer, kept a catalog of his Lausanne,

Switzerland library on playing cards.[55] He also was a good friend of Spencer and both

men spent time at each other's home. Could Gibbon have inspired Spencer's sheaf

catalog? Or perhaps the reverse is true -- did Spencer's sheaf catalog move Gibbon to

create his economical "card" catalog? Their friendship strongly suggests that one may

have influenced the other regarding library cataloging.

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52. Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*.

53. Joseph Ames, *Typographical Antiquities, or, the History of Printing in England, Scotland, and Ireland: Containing Memoirs of Our Ancient Printers, and a Register of the Books Printed by Them* (London: William Miller, 1810-1819).

54. Dibdin, *Aedes Althorpianae*, Vol. 1, 33, 35.

55. "Gibbon's Library: Some of Its Features and the Catalogue of It He Made Out of Playing Cards."

Spencer and Gibbon may have first become acquainted with each other in the late 1770s, when Spencer joined the Club, described on page 85.[56] Gibbon was also a member and a friend of Spencer's childhood tutor, William Jones, who had originally recommended Spencer for membership.[57] Spencer and Gibbon strengthened their friendship outside the Club, frequently socializing both in England and abroad.[58]

In 1785, Spencer and his wife, Lavinia, herself an erudite woman with literary friends,[59] spent a month in Lausanne. While there, they either visited Gibbon's home or entertained him at their residence almost every day.[60] When Gibbon was in England, he frequently visited Althorp to see Spencer and also to happily exploit Spencer's growing collection. Like Dibdin, Gibbon would occasionally "have a resolute intellectual conflict" with Spencer's librarian, Ocheda.[61]

In October 1793, Gibbon visited Spencer at Althorp for the final time.[62] Gibbon had already published his monumental, six-volume historical study, *The Decline and Fall*

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56. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Other Gibbon," *American Scholar* 46, no. 1 (Winter 1976-Winter 1977): 102.

57. Garland Cannon, "Sir William Jones and Dr. Johnson's Literary Club," *Modern Philology* 63, no. 1 (August 1965): 20, http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/stable/436892 (accessed September 15, 2008).

58. Trevor-Roper, "The Other Gibbon," 94.

59. Justice Hamilton, "John Charles, 3rd Earl Spencer," in the *Dictionary of National Biography,* ed. Sidney Lee, Vol. 18 (New York: Macmillan, 1909), 764.

60. Trevor-Roper, "The Other Gibbon," 94.

61. Ibid., 102.

62. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* ed. Henry Hart Milman (London: John Murray, 1838), xii.

of the Roman Empire[63] but continued his scholarly research until his death. According to his letters, Gibbon planned to arrive at Althorp on October 20; on November 6, he wrote a friend that he had "completely exhausted this morning among the first editions of Cicero" and would be leaving the following day.[64] At the time, Spencer's incunable and first-edition collections were still kept at Althorp.[65]

Gibbon had spent time in Paris in the early 1760s and at other times thereafter, in addition to extensive time elsewhere in Europe;[66] it may have been possible that he learned of the playing card system on one of his visits to Paris. Given his antipathy towards the French Revolution, he was unlikely to adopt a cataloging approach advocated by that country's revolutionary government. In any case he died in 1794, not long after the code was introduced, in 1791. An article in the *New York Times* stated that Gibbon used the cards when he was writing *Decline and Fall,*[67] a book he completed in 1788.[68]

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63. The final volume was printed in 1789.

64. Edward Gibbon, *The Life of Edward Gibbon: With Selections from His Correspondence and Illustrations,* ed. Henry Hart Milman (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1840), 290.

65. Dibdin, *Aedes Althorpianae,* Vol 1.

66. Gibbon, *The Life of Edward Gibbon.*

67. "Gibbon's Library: Some of its Features and the Catalogue of It He Made Out of Playing Cards."

68. "Gibbon, Edward," in *British Authors before 1800: A Biographical Dictionary.* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1952, http://wilsontxt.hwwilson.com/cbimages/1982/005/929/198200592901tn.jpg (accessed November 24, 2008).

Another writer noted that "in intervals of relaxation" Gibbon had begun to catalog his library by using playing cards, though he did not complete the catalog.[69]

Did Spencer and Gibbon exchange ideas about an easily revisable, relatively compact library cataloging system? Given the extensive contact between Gibbon and Spencer and the rough similarities of their then-rare catalogs, whether or not the two influenced each other regarding their cataloging practice is a promising research question.

Earl Spencer and His Library

A Brief Look at the Life of George John, the Second Earl Spencer

George John Spencer was born in 1758 to a life of privilege and status. As the first Earl Spencer's only son, he was entitled to the Spencer estates, property, and income that his father, John, had either inherited or acquired. This wealth included the expansive rural estate in Northamptonshire, which comprised the massive mansion known as Althorp and other small properties; Wimbledon (where Spencer was born); and Spencer House, the lavish palace that the first Earl Spencer had built at St. James's Square, London.

Spencer's education began at Althorp, where he was tutored by William Jones, a noted orientalist and linguist.[70] Spencer continued his studies at Harrow School and then entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he earned a master's degree in 1778.[71]

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69. James Westfall Thompson, "The Library of Gibbon the Historian," *The Library Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (July 1937), http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/stable/4302374 (accessed September 15, 2008).

70. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 414.

71. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 414.

Spencer later became a member of "the Club," an exclusive literary club founded by essayist and lexicographer Samuel Johnson; Jones, a friend of Johnson's, had recommended his former pupil for membership in the Club, which was formally known as "Samuel Johnson's Literary Club."[72] Spencer's involvement in the Club intimates his strong interest in continuously acquiring knowledge.

In 1780, Spencer was elected to represent Northampton in Parliament; two years later, he was elected to represent the county of Surrey.[73] In 1783 Spencer became the second Earl Spencer upon his father's death. Soon thereafter he quit the House of Commons and entered the House of Lords.[74] George John also held various posts in William Pitt's ministry and was named First Lord of the Admiralty in December 1794.[75] Spencer displayed little of his customary intellectual curiosity and dignity in this role, treating British sailors, who were usually impressed into service, with great harshness. When Spencer refused to improve the unsanitary conditions, paltry pay, scarce food, and other hardships, the sailors mutinied. Twenty-nine sailors were executed, and Spencer even pursued the possibility (until he was told it was illegal) of leaving the corpse of the mutiny's leader hanging in chains.[76]

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72. Lester, "Spencer, George John, Second Earl Spencer."

73. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 414.

74. Lester, "Spencer, George John, Second Earl Spencer."

75. Ibid.

76. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 416.

In 1806 Spencer resigned from this position to become Secretary of State for Home Affairs for the William Grenville ministry.[77] He retired from national politics in 1807, devoting himself to Northampton matters and his library.[78] In 1818-1819, Spencer made a "bibliographical tour" our Europe, acquiring the exceptional collection of the Duke di Cassano-Serra.[79] He retired to Althorp in 1833, remaining there until his death in 1834.[80] Heavily indebted and responsible for maintaining at least four homes,[81] George John left the third Earl Spencer with vast liabilities and onerous financial challenges.[82]

The Libraries Spencer Formed

Spencer inherited both a rich and celebrated library and very likely a keen interest in collecting books from his forbears. The library of his great-grandfather Charles, the third Earl Sunderland, was described as "the finest in Europe both for the disposition of the apartments and of the books."[83] Spencer's father greatly augmented this collection,

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77. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors*.

78. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 416.

79. Lester, "Spencer, George John, Second Earl Spencer." This purchase is described below.

80. Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*, 448.

81. Spencer had acquired a home in Ryde, on the Isle of Wight. Lister, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1776-1847, and 'the Bibliomania,'" Chapter 7. 1. Spencer may also have owned a home in the village of Bawtry in Yorkshire, about 170 miles north of London. Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*, 122.

82. Lister, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1776-1847, and 'the Bibliomania,'" Chapter 11, 5.

83. Hamilton, "John Charles, 3rd Earl Spencer." The library was divided in 1749 between Althorp and Blenheim Palace, the ancestral home of the Duke of Marlborough.

which already contained several valuable examples of early English literature, when he

acquired the collection of Dr. William George, Head Master of the prestigious private

boys' school Eton College.[84]

Scholarly and popular literature has aptly and abundantly celebrated Spencer's

acquisitions,[85] and therefore this thesis offers, in Dibdin's words, a "bird's eye view" of

Spencer's collection.[86] Spencer's library included scores of Bibles, in English, Latin,

French, Romansch, Greek, and other languages, including the first and second printings

of the Mainz "Psalter," the extraordinary multi-colored texts printed by Gutenberg's

peers, Johannes Fust and Peter Schoeffer. Spencer owned three of the four books

produced by Arnold Pannartz and Conrad Sweynheym in Subiaco, Italy, all of which

Pannartz and Sweynheym printed in the mid-1460s. He also owned the first edition of

the first book printed in Greek type, a grammar by Lascaris (1476) and at least 610

volumes printed by the Aldine press. Dibdin counted twenty-three Latin Bibles printed

before 1500 alone (and twenty-eight printed after); sixty-five English, Scottish, and

Welsh Bibles; and six polyglot (containing parallel versions in more than one language)

Bibles, including those of the prolific Antwerp printer Christopher Plantin and of

Cardinal Ximenes of Alcala, Spain.[87]

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84. Bruce, "The Althorp Library (Part I)," 33-38.

85. A small selection of examples includes Bruce, "The Althorp Library (Part I)," 33-38.; "Famous among Libraries: The Almost Priceless Gift of Mrs. Rylands"; "[Earl Spencer's Library]"; Lister, "The Althorp Library of the Second Earl Spencer"; Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries*; and virtually every bibliographical book Dibdin wrote.

86. Dibdin, *Aedes Althorpianae*, Vol. 1, vi.

87. Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*, 579-80.

In addition to continental printers, Spencer was keenly interested in the work of early English printers. He owned fifty-seven books printed by England's first printer, William Caxton; his closest rival, the British Museum, had had eighty-one Caxtons of which twenty-five were duplicates.[88] He also owned a copy of William Tynedale's *New Testament (The newe testament)* (1536);[89] Tynedale was an English Protestant activist who translated the Bible into vernacular English. Spencer also owned Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*, with Johnson's own handwritten corrections.[90]

Most of the scholarly and popular literature about Spencer's book collection refers to the "Althorp library."[91] In fact, Spencer distributed his books among his many residences.[92] While his largest library was at Althorp, he kept many of his most monetarily valuable books (the incunables) at Spencer House. He also kept some books at the family estates in Wimbledon and Ryde. Spencer's Numerical Index, discussed in Chapter Five, demonstrates that the Earl's book collection was distributed not only among the various book cases at Spencer House and hundreds of book shelves at Althorp;

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88. Bruce, "The Althorp Library (Part I)," 33-38.

89. Ibid.

90. Timmins, *Lord Spencer's Library*, 8.

91. For example, see Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts*; Bruce, "The Althorp Library (Part I)"; Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer"; and Reid, "The Finest Private Library in Europe."

92. Other writers have recognized that Spencer had libraries at both Althorp and Spencer House; see for example Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* and Lister, "The Althorp Library of the Second Earl Spencer."

the catalog also implies that Spencer had books in Wimbledon and Ryde, as it assigned

the letter W or R, respectively, to books kept in these locations.

Following the movement of Spencer's collection may help uncover where each

sheaf catalog was kept. Brenda Scragg wrote that Spencer had one manuscript catalog

for Spencer House and a second one for Althorp, but she does not discuss which catalog

was kept where.[93] Studying the physical location of Spencer's books may also help us

understand how this mythologized collector adapted his libraries – and even how his

libraries changed him.

When Spencer began his serious collecting efforts, Althorp housed virtually all of

the family's book collection. However, at some point, Spencer began to keep certain

prized books at Spencer House. While historical records do not specify exactly when he

split his collection (unevenly) between Althorp and Spencer House, by 1802 Spencer had

"all those [editions] printed before the year 1500 at my House in London."[94] In the

Aedes Althorpianae, Dibdin wrote (in 1822) that the first editions of Cicero that Gibbon,

in 1793, had so gleefully devoured had been kept at Spencer House for the previous

twenty years.[95] Thus, according to these comments, by 1802 Spencer had moved his

incunable collection from Althorp to London.

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93. Scragg, "John Rylands and Enriqueta Augustina Tennant Rylands."

94. George John Spencer to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, July 1802, in Letters of George John, 2nd Earl Spencer, to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, Spencer Eng MS 71, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

95. Dibdin, *Aedes Althorpianae,* Vol. 1, 21.

In addition to his first editions of Cicero's works, Spencer kept at Spencer House books printed by English early printer William Caxton and by the Italian early printer Aldus Manutius and his heirs. These books were stored in bookcases specially built for the works of each printing house.[96] The Aldus cases must have been extensive, because the Rylands stored Spencer's collection – eight hundred Aldines – in a separate room at the library.[97]

A simple, graphic measure of the difference between the Althorp and Spencer House libraries is the proportion of the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* that Dibdin devoted to each library. The *Aedes Althorpianae*, which comprises *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* Volumes 5 and 6, included books kept at Althorp, as well as extensive discussion regarding the history of the Spencer family and of Althorp; the estate's architecture, floor plans, and landscape; and artwork displayed throughout the grand residence, by Gainsborough, Titian, Rembrandt, and others. In contrast, the volumes of the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* that describe books kept at Spencer House (Volumes 1 through 4 and Volume 7) contain nothing but bibliographical content, albeit far more prolix than the bibliographical descriptions in the *Aedes*.

While Spencer House held the more "valuable" books, Althorp had a vast quantity of them: 45,000 according to Dibdin's 1812 reckoning.[98] These books lined the

96. This information is derived from the location key pasted onto the fly-leaf of Spencer's numerical index, described in Chapter Five. "S.C." indicated the Caxton case (the "S." presumably signified "Spencer [House]" and "Ald." meant "Aldine."

97 Lister, "The Althorp Library of the Second Earl Spencer," 69.

98. Dibdin, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana,* Vol. 1, ii.

walls of several rooms that formed a large L on the mansion's first (or ground) floor. In the first volume of the *Aedes Althorpianae,* Dibdin meticulously described these rooms and the dozens of paintings they held.[99] The first room a visitor would encounter after leaving the drawing room was the aptly named Long Library, which measured slightly over 81 feet long and 21 feet wide. In 1822, this room held first editions, "fifteeners," theological works including Bibles, and books "distinguished for their rarity and condition, and for the beauty of their bindings."[100] The next room was the Raphael Library, 25 feet long and almost 24 feet wide, which held poetry collections and books regarding county history. The room gained its name from a painting hung in the library and attributed to Raphael.

The Raphael Library led to the Billiard Library, which measured 10 feet longer than the Raphael Library. It contained books on history and additional poetry collections and, unsurprisingly, a billiard table. The Marlborough Library was next, matching the Raphael Library in size. It held books regarding "Voyages and Travels" and history.[101] The final "official" room in the Althorp libraries was the Gothic Library, over 39 feet wide and 27 feet long. It contained the "finer copies" and all classifications of books printed upon large paper.[102] Books were also kept in the Picture Gallery, a room 115 feet long.

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99. Dibdin, *Aedes Althorpianae,* Vol. 1.

100. Ibid., 21.

101. Dibdin, *Aedes Althorpianae,* Vol. 1, 26-27.

102. Dibdin, *Aedes Althorpianae,* Vol. 1, 32.

The other five volumes of the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* focus exclusively on books (aside from the prefaces). Dibdin's descriptions of the Spencer House library are scanty, in contrast to his lengthy discourses on Althorp, and we therefore lack a detailed look at the physical arrangement of Spencer's London library. We know that the Earl converted the mansion's "Palm Room" into a library.[103] Based on the location key pasted into his Numerical Index, Spencer kept books in a "Permanent Library" ("P.L.") and "Parliamentary Room" ("S.Parl."), in addition to the Caxton and Aldine cases. The key also implies that Spencer stored books in a general library area at Spencer House, as books having the location code "S." meant that the books were simply at Spencer House.

Even though Spencer retired to Althorp in 1833, remaining there until his death in 1834,[104] he left his fifteeners and other fine books at Spencer House.[105] Shortly after Spencer's death, the Spencer House library was moved to Northamptonshire and integrated with the Althorp library. This move may have occurred as early as 1836; Dibdin wrote in his *Reminiscences* (published in 1836) that the "whole of the SPENCER LIBRARY is now at Althorp." Edwards visited the Althorp library in 1864, writing that the Spencer House collection had been "amalgamated" with the Althorp library and that the latter had subsequently grown from four rooms to eight.[106] By 1892, when Enriqueta

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103. Friedman and Fiennes, *Spencer House,* 221.

104. Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life,* 448.

105. "Appendix to Chronicle: Deaths Nov. 10," in *The Annual Register, or, a View of the History, Politics, and Literature of the Year 1834* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1835), 244-45.

106. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* 426.

Rylands bought most of Spencer's collection, the Spencer House library had been almost entirely forgotten; newspaper articles referred to Rylands's purchase of the "Althorp library," not mentioning the significant role Spencer House once played.

Spencer had begun his serious book collecting activities in 1790, when he was thirty-two and bought the "choice collection" of Count Reviczky, a Hungarian nobleman.[107] Reviczky abhorred marginalia but prized early first editions and European incunables.[108] Edwards wrote that while no collector had acquired all the books printed by a particular early printer, Reviczky had come closest, amassing Aldines[109] and books printed by other famed printers such as Tonson, Baskerville, Elzevir, Morelius, and many others.[110]

This purchase established a lofty bibliographical standard that Spencer sought to maintain throughout his collecting career. It also helped establish Spencer as a perspicacious (and lucky) book collector. Spencer had agreed to pay the Count £1,000 plus an annuity of £500 for Revickzy's prized library.[111] When Reviczky died in August 1793, the Earl acquired an unparalleled book collection for a relative bargain.[112]

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107. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors*.

108. Lister, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1776-1847, and 'the Bibliomania,'" Chapter 6, 1.

109. Aldines are books printed by the venerated early Venetian printer, Aldus Manutius (1449/1450-1515) and his heirs.

110. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* 402.

111. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries*, 403.

112. While the amount Spencer paid for Reviczky's collection was a relative bargain, it is sobering to realize that Spencer hired his first librarian, Tommaso de Ocheda, with an annual salary of only £67. Lister, "George John, 2nd Earl Spencer and His 'Librarian,'" 93.

Spencer hired an Italian librarian, Tommaso de Ocheda, shortly after he bought

the Reviczky collection.[113] Expanded through this sizable acquisition, Spencer's library

required a full-time librarian's attention and expertise. Ocheda had previously served as

librarian to Pierre-Antoine Bolongaro Crevenna, a well-respected book collector who

lived in Amsterdam. Ocheda's need for a new job was probably related to the six-volume

auction catalog he and Crevenna prepared. The catalog described hundreds of books

Crevenna intended to sell in 1798,[114] implying that the library for which Ocheda served

as librarian would soon no longer exist.

Other notable and equally famed book-related events in Spencer's life involved

his purchase of the Valdarfer Boccaccio, believed to be the only perfect copy of this

fifteenth century book, and his acquisition of the Duke of Cassano-Serra's library. In

1818, shortly before Spencer bought this collection, Ocheda retired; he returned to Italy,

where he died in 1831.[115] When Ocheda retired, Spencer declined to hire Dibdin, who

was still actively seeking the position. Instead, he turned to George Appleyard, a former

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113. Although Ocheda's first name is spelled "Tomaso" in English-language books and articles, I have used "Tommaso," the Italian spelling. In Italian-language notices of Ocheda's death, his name is consistently spelled "Tommaso de Ocheda." See Giovanni Batista Niccolini, *Opere Di Giovanni-Batista Niccolini: edizione ordinata e rivista dall'autor,* Vol. 3 (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1844), 415.

114. Pietro Antonio Crevenna and Tommaso de Ocheda, *Catalogue des livres de la bibliotheque de M. Pierre-Antoine Bolongaro-Crevenna* (Amsterdam: D.J. Changuion & P. den Hengst, 1789).

115. Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life,* and Niccolini, *Opere Di Giovanni-Batista Niccolini.*

Navy and Transport Office clerk, whom Spencer had hired in 1817 as his secretary. Appleyard gradually assumed responsibility for Spencer's library.[116]

Spencer bought the Cassano-Serra collection during his 1819-1820 tour of Europe. This collection, which infused his already remarkable library with fine and rare examples of incunabula, was Spencer's final important purchase.

George John's Descendants and the Fate of the Spencer Libraries

John Charles, George John's first-born son, inherited his father's legacy and heavy debts. Upon becoming the third Earl Spencer, John Charles had discovered that his inheritance – several residences, hundreds of acres of land, thousands of valuable books, scores of Old Master paintings – included massive debts incurred by his father.[117] The debts totaled over £500,000, with annual interest payments of £30,000; the estate as a whole generated only £40,000 a year.[118] Trying to reduce expenses, John Charles "virtually closed" Spencer House.[119] It is likely that John Charles moved the Spencer House collection to Althorp, to minimize the cost involved in maintaining two valuable libraries.

John's decision to shutter Spencer House and avoid London was made easier by his profound inclination to the rural life. After serving as a member of Parliament, first in

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116. Lister, "George John, 2nd Earl Spencer and His 'Librarian.'"

117. Hamilton, "John Charles, 3rd Earl Spencer," 773.

118. Friedman and Fiennes, *Spencer House.*

119. Denis Le Marchant, *Memoir of John Charles, Viscount Althorp, Third Earl Spencer* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1876), 542.

the House of Commons and after 1834 in the House of Lords, John Charles returned to the country "with unalloyed delight."[120] He had even tried unsuccessfully to sell Spencer House along with three other buildings, diamonds, and several Old Master paintings for £60,000.[121]

John Charles spent much of his adult life at Wiseton Hall, the ancestral home of his wife, Esther Acklom.[122] Her father's only heir, Esther inherited his considerable properties, including Wiseton Hall in Nottinghamshire, located in the East Midlands of England. John Charles and Esther, a "young heiress," married in April 1814.[123] Soon after, they began restoring Wiseton's long-neglected structures and land, refurbishing the main residence, building houses for tenants, replanting acres of trees, and reestablishing the gardens. The third Earl later devoted himself to agricultural endeavors, including breeding highly prized cattle; he was also the first president of the Royal Agricultural Society.[124] John Charles was so fond of Wiseton that he continued to live there even after his wife's death.[125] He died there on October 1, 1845; because John Charles died childless, his brother Frederick became the fourth Earl Spencer.[126]

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120. "John Charles Spencer," in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information*, Vol. 25 (New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1911), 638.

121. Friedman and Fiennes, *Spencer House*.

122. Le Marchant, *Memoir of John Charles*.

123. Ibid., 148.

124. Hamilton, "John Charles, 3rd Earl Spencer," 768-75.

125. Esther died tragically in childbirth, only four years after their marriage. John Charles was her sole heir. ("Minor Correspondence," *The Gentleman's Magazine: An Historical*

Despite his strong preference for Wiseton, John Charles tended Althorp and its

famed library, now even larger and more valuable having been combined with the

Spencer House library. A visitor's diary indirectly confirms that John Charles even

continued employing George Appleyard, Spencer's secretary and librarian. George

Ticknor, a respected American scholar and former Harvard College professor,[127]

described a visit to Althorp in 1838, when the third Earl was still alive. On May 29,

1838, Ticknor wrote with anticipation that Mr. Appleyard, "the last Earl's librarian, . . .

who knows the library better than anyone else alive" would soon be arriving at Althorp

"for the express purpose of showing the rarities" to Ticknor and his wife.[128]

Appleyard was still serving as Althorp's librarian during Frederick's tenure as the

fourth Earl Spencer. A letter from J.G. Cogswell of the Astor Library[129] dated January

26, 1849 described a visit to the Althorp library: "Mr. Appleyard the librarian" greeted

Cogswell and showed him the library's treasures.[130] In his diary entry for December 20,

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Chronicle 89 [May 1819]: 386.) After his death, Wiseton Hall was sold. (Leonard Jacks, *The Great Houses of Nottinghamshire and the County Families* [Nottingham {England}: W. and A.S. Bradshaw, 1881], 173.) It was demolished in 1960. Andy Nicholson, "Nottinghamshire History: Wiseton," http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/Jacks1881/wiseton.htm (accessed December 5, 2008).

126. "Spencer, John Charles," 638.

127. Warner Berthoff, "George Ticknor: Brief Life of a Scholarly Pioneer: 1791-1871," *Harvard Magazine* 107, no. 3 (accessed December 6, 2008).

128. George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor,* Vol. 2 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1876), 170.

129. In 1895, the Astor Library was combined with the Lenox Library and Tilden Foundation to become the New York Public Library. New York Public Library, "NYPL History," http://www.nypl.org/pr/history.cfm (accessed December 5, 2008).

130. J. G. Cogswell, "The Althorp Library," *The Southern Literary Messenger* 15, no. 4 (April 1849): 244.

1849, the poet, historian, and politician Lord Macaulay (Thomas Babington) mentioned

Mr. Appleyard; Macaulay was visiting Althorp in late December of that year to

"rummage [Spencer] family papers" and spent time in the celebrated library, with

Appleyard serving as librarian.[131]

In contrast to his brother, Frederick was a spendthrift and extrovert who left little

impression in politics or history.[132] He died on December 27, 1857, unexpectedly leaving

behind few debts.[133]

Upon Frederick's death, his son, John Poyntz Spencer, became the fifth Earl.[134]

John resumed the family tradition of government service, serving as a member of

Parliament and later as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland,[135] responsible for representing British

rule in Ireland. In the mid-1880s, after John began to advocate for "Home Rule" in

Ireland, he and his wife found themselves shunned and lambasted by their friends and

even by Queen Victoria.[136]

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131. George Otto Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (London: Longmans, Green, 1881), 534.

132. For example, the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* carries entries for the second, third, and fifth Earls Spencer but not for Frederick, the fourth.

133. Friedman and Fiennes, *Spencer House.*

134. James William Edmund Doyle, *The Official Baronage of England, Showing the Succession, Dignities, and Offices of Every Peer from 1066 to 1885, with Sixteen Hundred Illustrations,* Vol. 3 (London: Longmans, Green, 1886), 381-82.

135. Doyle, *The Official Baronage of England,* 383.

136. Spencer, *The Red Earl.* Home Rule sought to minimize British control and allow Ireland to govern itself at least partially.

John also became known as the Spencer who sold the Althorp library. In the late 1800s, the Spencer family found itself again in financial troubles, suffering from a wide-spread agricultural depression (Althorp derived substantial income from tenant farmers) and from the collapse of Barings Bank.[137] John had already begun renting Spencer House,[138] but even that grand residence could not generate enough income to offset the heavy losses the family was suffering.

By 1890 at the latest the Earl had begun seriously considering selling the Althorp library. The debts he faced threatened John's ability to pass the Earldom and its assets to the next Earl; he needed to generate cash to keep Althorp in Spencer hands. Selling the second Earl's famed collection would generate a tremendous and desperately needed infusion of funds. He considered selling the china collection, but such a sale would have generated an insignificant amount of money.[139]

John shared these deliberations with friends, writing to one that

> the heavy depression in agriculture which has for many years
> prevailed makes it extremely difficult for me to keep locked up the
> large amount of capital which the books here represent.[140]

Even U.S. newspapers were interested in the Althorp library's potential sale. *The [Baltimore] Sun* printed a brief article on January 8, 1890, confirming that John Spencer had already taken action to sell the library: "Earl Spencer's Library at Althorp,

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137. Friedman and Fiennes, *Spencer House,* 249.

138. Spencer, *The Red Earl,* 249.

139. Spencer, *The Red Earl,* 249.

140. Letter from Spencer to E. Thompson dated January 7, 1890, in Spencer, *The Red Earl,* 195.

Northamptonshire, is to be disbursed."[141] The Earl apparently changed his mind soon after; an article two months later informed readers that John had "reconsidered his purpose of selling" the Althorp library.[142]

He may have considered selling even earlier. In early 1885, the monthly journal *Book-Lore* printed a two-part article celebrating the Althorp library and enumerating its treasures.[143] The article was written by John Spencer's close friend, Charles Brudenell-Bruce. In an 1889 letter to John Spencer, Bruce had pledged to write an article intended to burnish the library's financial value and encourage an advantageous sale.[144] The 1885 articles may have been an early attempt by Bruce to market the Althorp library for his friend.

Spencer's letter to Thompson provides further insight into the Earl's resolution to sell the library. Most contemporaneous and recent writing on the Althorp library sale disregards John Spencer's complex deliberations; instead, writers have emphasized George John's collecting acumen, his library's value, and Enriqueta Rylands's magnanimousness. In contrast, John Spencer's wrenching decision to sell the Althorp library has received scant attention. Some horrified writers saw John's decision as a

141. [Earl Spencer's Library].

142. "[Earl Spencer; Althorp Library; England]," *Idaho Daily Statesman,* March 4, 1890.

143. Charles Bruce, "The Althorp Library (Part II)," *Book-Lore: A Magazine Devoted to Old-Time Literature,* no. 3 (February 1885): 65; and Bruce, *The Althorp Library (Part I),* 33-38.

144. Letter from Bruce to Spencer dated January 31, 1889, in Spencer, *The Red Earl,* 195. Peter Gordon has not and I have not been able to find this article, which Bruce tentatively entitled "The Treasure of the Althorp Library" in his letter.

purely financial one, a bloodless effort to exchange the family's patrimony for cash, by a descendant who cared little for the books' value.

For example, Jennifer Ciro responded to the Althorp sale by writing that, "[w]hen financial difficulties arose, books, regardless of their value or rarity, were often the first items to be sold."[145] Reid recognized John's "great reluctance" in selling; however, Reid also dwelled on the assertion that "[s]elling books was, of course, a much easier and less painful option" to alleviate financial burdens.[146]

John's letters expose in fact how painful his decision was. In the second Earl's lifetime, scholars and other friends visited often to use the library. In the late 1800s, in contrast, Althorp entertained far fewer people who were interested in the library, and the bibliographic fervor that infused so many visits in George John's time had dramatically abated. John regretted that hardly anyone used the library the way that George John intended it to be used (and indeed the way it actually was used); he hoped that a public institution would buy the books and rectify this cultural loss:

> In one way I should be glad to see the books more available for the
> Public for I often lament how few people visit the Library to see
> the early editions and other curiosities.[147]

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145. Jennifer Ciro, "Country House Libraries in the Nineteenth Century," *Library History* 18, no. 2 (July 2002): 97.

146. Reid, "The Finest Private Library in Europe," 69.

147. Letter from Spencer to E. Thompson dated January 7, 1890, in Spencer, *The Red Earl,* 196.

Another challenge the Earl faced was to keep the books safe. Securing the books from burglars and other thieves had become more burdensome than it was in the second Earl's time.[148]

Once the books had been shipped to Manchester, John and his wife, Charlotte, confronted the vast empty space left at Althorp. It was profoundly poignant for John to live in a house that had once been synonymous with endless shelves of fine antiquarian and scholarly books.[149] To save Althorp, he had sold its most prominent asset.

Charlotte Spencer was also greatly saddened by the empty bookshelves and began a project to alter and redecorate the former library rooms.[150] She even started to collect books for herself, turning the Long Library back into a library by having it "re-planted with books."[151] In addition, Enriqueta Rylands did not take every book from Althorp; she left books that were too costly to move and tangential to her library's initial theological focus. Thus, Althorp's shelves were not completely barren: the Spencers had kept about two thousand books, including Annual Registers, Royal Agricultural Society reports, and novels.[152]

Despite John's ambivalence about selling the library, he was a keen negotiator over price and commissions. He successfully convinced E.G. Hodge of Sotheby,

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148. Battiscombe, *The Spencers of Althorp*, 237.

149. Spencer, *The Red Earl*.

150. Battiscombe, *The Spencers of Althorp*, 237.

151. Diary entry by Charlotte Spencer, June 1893, in Spencer, *The Red Earl*, 204.

152. John Spencer to Charlotte Spencer, October 3, 1892, in Spencer, *The Red Earl*.

Wilkinson and Hodge (which later became Sotheby's) to accept a 9 percent commission, almost half of the customary rate.[153] John had also priced the collection at £300,000, considerably higher than the £220,000 Enriqueta Rylands agreed to pay.[154] He was not the only one to value the Althorp libraries so highly: only hours after John Spencer signed a contract with Rylands, an American agent acting on the New York Public Library's behalf offered £300,000 for the collection.[155]

The "Rescue" of the Spencer Library

Had she not acquired one of the most venerated private libraries ever known, Enriqueta Augustina Tennant Rylands would most likely be little known today. She was a wealthy yet pious woman who intended to establish a public theological library to honor her late husband; by buying George John Spencer's collection, Rylands gained a place in history for her husband and herself. Only a few weeks after learning that the Althorp library was for sale, Rylands was moving thousands of the Earl's celebrated books books from Northamptonshire to Manchester, where it would help form the John Rylands Memorial Library.

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153. Spencer, *The Red Earl,* 203.

154. John Spencer received two payments from Rylands, the first for £130,00 and second for £60,772; Hodge's commission was £18,867. Spencer, *The Red Earl,* 203. These figures add up to £209,639, less than the contract price. The value of the books Rylands left at Althorp may account for this difference.

155. Ibid., 21.

Enriqueta Rylands was born in Cuba in 1801 to prosperous parents, her father being a merchant based in Liverpool and Havana.[156] She was educated in New York, Paris, and London and at some point – little is known of her early life – she came to live in Manchester. There, in the 1860s, she became close to Martha Ryland, John Rylands's wife, when Martha's health was failing. Enriqueta and John married in October 1876, eight months after Martha's death.

John Rylands owned and operated a thriving enterprise engaged in manufacturing cotton and linen goods, a business his father had established but which John Rylands enlarged profitably. His financial success allowed him to pursue philanthropic and cultural endeavors, such as printing Bibles that he distributed free of charge and collecting books in theology and business.[157] He shared these interests with his young wife (Enriqueta was forty-two years younger than John), who continued and spectacularly expanded the book collection her husband had started.

After John Rylands died in 1888, Enriqueta quickly decided upon a meaningful tribute to her late husband. The John Rylands Memorial Library, as Enriqueta envisioned, would focus on theology, the moral and intellectual field to which her late husband dedicated himself.[158] By late 1889, Enriqueta had already bought the land on

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156. Scragg, "John Rylands and Enriqueta Augustina Tennant Rylands," 389.

157. Ibid., 389.

158. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 390.

which the Rylands would be built and had received plans and estimates from Basil

Champneys, the era's most respected architect working in the Gothic style.[159]

Advised by the Reverend Samuel Gosnell Green and his son, John Arnold Green,

Enriqueta initially sought books that reflected her late husband's devotion to theology.[160]

The Greens worked with the bookselling firm of Henry Sotheran to find appropriate

books. J. A. Green viewed the Rylands' intended purpose more broadly than did

Enriqueta, and he occasionally veered from her collection development plans by buying,

for example, an expensive set of volumes on the highly regarded English landscape

painter J. M. W. Turner.[161]

The new library's budget was ample, thanks to John Rylands's financial success,

and by mid-1892 Enriqueta had amassed a considerable collection. The library's greatest

acquisition occurred that summer, shortly after the *The Times* (London) printed an article

that Earl Spencer intended to sell the Althorp library.[162] By June 21, 1892, Enriqueta had

authorized Sotheran's to represent her in negotiations to buy the library and on July 22,

the parties signed a purchase agreement. Enriqueta agreed to buy all the books at

Althorp, plus any removed to Spencer House, for £210,000; if John Spencer wished to

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159. Ibid., 392.

160. Scragg, "Mrs Rylands and the Spencer Library," 217.

161. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 392.

162. "[Lord Spencer Resolves to Sell the Althorp Library]," *The (London) Times*, June 17, 1892, http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive/ (accessed September 1, 2008).

keep any books, he could pay a "reasonable" price for any such books.[163] The library had

not even been built and yet it already enjoyed lavish international recognition and praise.

The structure now serves as the University of Manchester's Special Collections

Division and houses many of the library's special collections and archival materials.

While a recently constructed addition has added substantial storage, exhibition, study,

and general space, the original library structure remains the visual focus. The Rylands

sheaf catalog is stored in a small conference room in the library's nineteenth-century

basement; the Spencer collection is kept on hundreds of shelves (shielded by plexi-glass)

in rooms that flank the original grand reading room.

As noted earlier, Enriqueta offered the Earl far less than he believed the library

was worth. However, her proposal included several invaluable features: the collection

would remain whole; the books would remain in England; and the public would have

access to the collection. John Spencer considered these factors – a combination or,

ideally, all of them – as essential to a sale.

By remaining together, the collection retained its history and identity as the

Althorp library. Thus, the unparalleled library that George John Spencer had amassed

would continue to memorialize the Earl's acumen and dedication as a book collector.

Spencer had also helped create an asset that was private and yet was considered

intrinsically British; even though many of the books were from continental Europe, the

library as a whole represented British literacy and bibliographic accomplishment.

Contemporaneous newspaper articles, reacting to Earl Spencer's announced plans to sell

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163. Simmons, "George John, Second Earl Spencer," 393.

the library, reflected fear that the books would leave England, depriving the nation of a this great cultural asset. By keeping the books in England, Enriqueta allayed this fear.

Finally, one of John Spencer's main concerns was that the Althorp library should be more accessible to the public. In Enriqueta's hands, Spencer's collection became a significant, foundational part of a public library in the large and growing city of Manchester. The Althorp library has enjoyed a far wider audience than it had ever entertained in Northamptonshire. Thus, selling the library to Enriqueta both calmed the anxiety John Spencer felt over selling his ancestor's historic collection and provided him the capital needed to maintain Althorp and the Spencer earldom.

Spencer's Bibliographic Legacy

In building his fabled library, George John Spencer spent lavishly and carefully. He sought continental Europe's finest early editions, first printings, and incunables, thereby creating an unparalleled collection. Spencer also benefitted from European librarianship, hiring an Italian librarian experienced in managing a library similar to, albeit smaller than, Spencer's.

While Spencer and his collection have received vast and celebratory attention, his library catalogs have been virtually ignored. We therefore have little information about the catalogs' provenance. Studying the catalogs themselves will provide the greatest store of knowledge yet available. The following chapter presents research into both sheaf catalogs, the Rylands and Grolier versions, and offers additional possibilities regarding the catalogs' uses and locations.

CHAPTER FOUR

SPENCER: A LIBRARIAN IN DISGUISE

The Second Earl's Ingenious Cataloging System

Nineteenth-century bibliophiles revered George John Spencer, considering him

one of the world's most accomplished book collectors and connoisseurs. Spencer's

reputation has endured, garnering him and his library near-immortal status in English and

rare book history. Unfortunately, Spencer's collection was so superlative that it outshone

another extraordinary feature of his library: his remarkable and apparently unique

cataloging system. Spencer's sheaf catalogs are the oldest existing sheaf catalogs known

today; in fact, there is no record of any other sheaf catalog having been created before

Spencer's catalogs originated.

As noted in the Introduction, Spencer owned two sheaf catalogs. Most scholars

have reasonably concluded that Spencer kept one catalog at Althorp, in

Northamptonshire, and one at Spencer House, in London; while Spencer kept books at

four of his residences, Althorp and Spencer House held his most significant libraries.

The Althorp and Spencer House libraries were far likelier to need sheaf catalogs than

Spencer's book collections at Ryde and Wimbledon.

Today, the Grolier Club in New York City owns one catalog, while the John

Rylands Memorial Library of Manchester owns the second. The catalogs strongly

resemble each other, as they have similar dimensions and features and are made of

identical or similar materials. They both have three drawers, each containing dozens of

sheaves. The sheaves in both catalogs very likely contain identical bibliographical records and cross-reference slips.[1]

They differ most obviously in the number of drawers. The Grolier catalog has four drawers while the Rylands catalog has three; the Grolier's fourth drawer contains supplies to make additional slips and sheaves. The Rylands chest has slightly more wood tooling, making it somewhat more ornate than the Grolier chest. The metal handles on the chests seem to be made of different materials. And while the slips contain apparently identical information, different people wrote the slips. Finally, it is likely that the Grolier catalog anteceded the Rylands catalog; it may in fact have served as an exemplar for the Rylands catalog, with its slips being used to create the Rylands catalog's slips.

This chapter describes both catalogs comprehensively, paying special attention to the Grolier sheaf catalog. The Grolier catalog's chest and sheaves are described first, followed by the Rylands catalog's chest and sheaves. The discussion then turns to possible creators and creation dates, how Spencer may have used them (i.e., did one travel with him), and where the catalogs may have been kept. This chapter concludes by presenting an extensive analysis of bibliographic and cross-reference slips taken predominately from the Grolier sheaf catalog.

As this chapter explains, most of the catalogs' history – such as why they were created, who created them, when they were created, how they were used – is limited to conjecture. Until further details about the catalogs can be uncovered, the catalogs

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1. Each of the Grolier slips viewed matched a Rylands slip, strengthening the probability that the two catalogs contain identical records. Because of time limitations, this study could not examine every slip.

themselves plus the available circumstantial historical evidence offer our sole, engrossing

insight into the catalogs' origination, location, use, and movement.

The Grolier Club Catalog

The Chest

The Grolier catalog comprises dozens of small booklets – the sheaves – that are

housed in a chest built especially for the catalog. The chest measures 24.5 inches deep

and 38 inches wide and has four large drawers. Built of mahogany, the chest rests on a

stand composed of four slender mahogany legs, each ending with a caster.[2] The

combined height of the chest and stand is 46 inches. A delicate brass handle was

mounted in the center of both sides of the chest. The drawers can be secured with a lock;

one skeleton key unlocks all four drawers.[3] The exterior of each drawer, except the

bottom one, has two ivory discs with a letter on each disc, indicating the alphabetical

span of each drawer's records. The first drawer is labeled "A" and "F"; the second, "G"

and "P"; and the third, "Q" and "Z." Please see figure 4.2. for a three-quarter view of the

chest. Figure 4.3. offers a closer, front-view of the chest. Please note that the disc for the

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2. According to the auction catalog description, the Grolier sheaf catalog is two combined pieces. The pieces were well integrated, making the chest appear to be a single unit, rather than a set of drawers mounted on a stand. (Christie's, Auction Catalog Description for Spencer Library Catalogue [Lot 279, Sale 5424], http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?from=searchresults&intObjectID=266002&sid=c79ac19d-c656-4782-bf73-5fe7a0d2833f [accessed January 25, 2009].)

3. It is unclear why the drawers lock. Spencer's bookcases were locked; his secured bookcases can be seen in figure 4.14. But why lock bibliographic records? Perhaps Spencer wanted to prevent any interference with Ocheda's time-consuming, disorderly, and endless efforts to manage Spencer's collection.

letter "F" was missing when the photograph for figure 4.2. was taken, but it has since
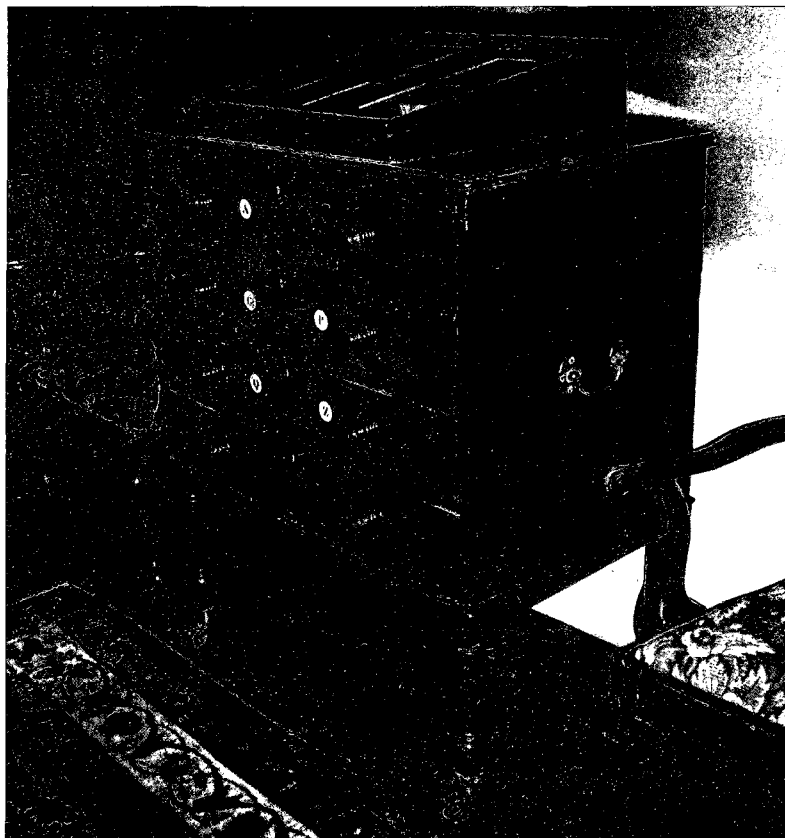
been replaced with a replica.

Figure 4.2. Grolier sheaf catalog, three-quarter view. Photograph
by Fernando Peña of the Grolier Club.

Next page: Figure 4.3. Grolier sheaf catalog, front view.
Photograph by Fernando Peña of the Grolier Club.

The chest was built specifically to house Spencer's catalog, as it has a few unusual features. As noted above, three of the drawers are labeled alphabetically and the chest's legs have casters, theoretically allowing the catalog to be moved relatively easily. In addition, each of the first three drawers has eighty slots or "pigeon-holes," as the sheaf catalog's most active promoter, Douglas Stewart, might have called them.[4] The slots are arranged in twenty rows from left to right and in four rows from front to back. Each slot measures approximately 2.5 inches wide, 3.5 inches high, and 5 inches deep. Figure 4.4. is a photograph of the chest with the first three drawers partially opened.

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4. Stewart, *The Sheaf Catalogue,* 20.
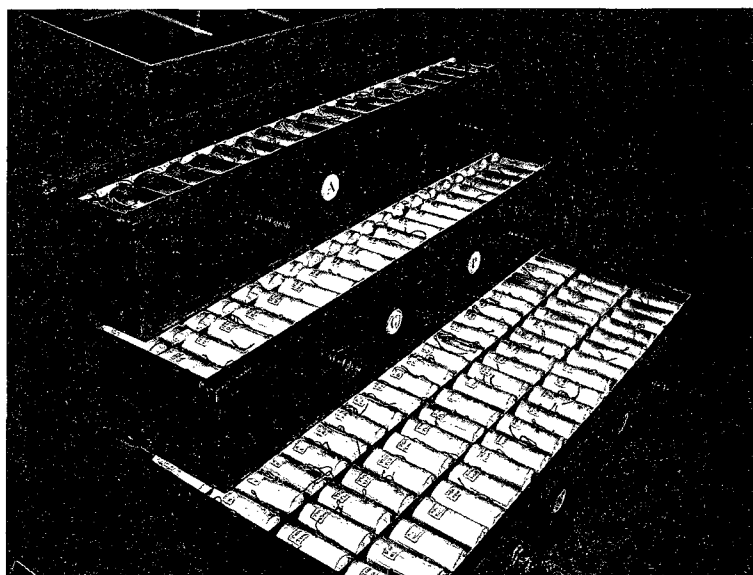
**Figure 4.4. Grolier sheaf catalog with first three drawers extended.
Photograph by Fernando Peña of the Grolier Club.**

One can pull each drawer out so that all the slots are accessible; behind the last

row of slots is an unslotted space that is counterweighted to prevent the drawer from

falling out when the back row is accessed. This feature is almost visible in figure 4.5., a

photograph of the Grolier catalog's third drawer. It can also be seen in figure 4.6., a

photograph of the Rylands catalog's first drawer.
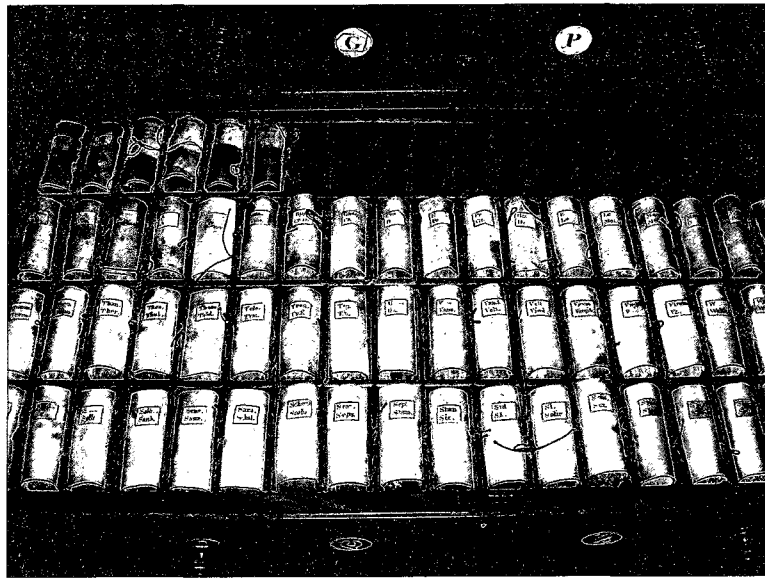
Figure 4.5. Grolier sheaf catalog, third drawer. Photograph by
Fernando Peña of the Grolier Club.

Figure 4.6. Rylands sheaf catalog, first drawer.
Photograph by the author.

The fourth drawer mainly contains supplies for making slips and sheaves: gilt-edged slips of paper, boards for the sheaf covers, string, and spine labels. The drawer also contains twenty-three more sheaves; all but one of these is labeled "Anonymous Tracts." The remaining sheaf is unlabeled. In addition, there are several dozen unfiled slips (most regard "Union (Scotland + England)") and unbound signatures that appear to

come from the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* and possibly from a Caxton that the Roxburghe

Club, under Spencer's direction, reprinted. To accommodate all these items, the fourth

drawer is an "ordinary" drawer, without the slots that the top three drawers have. Figure

4.7. shows the fourth drawer's contents.
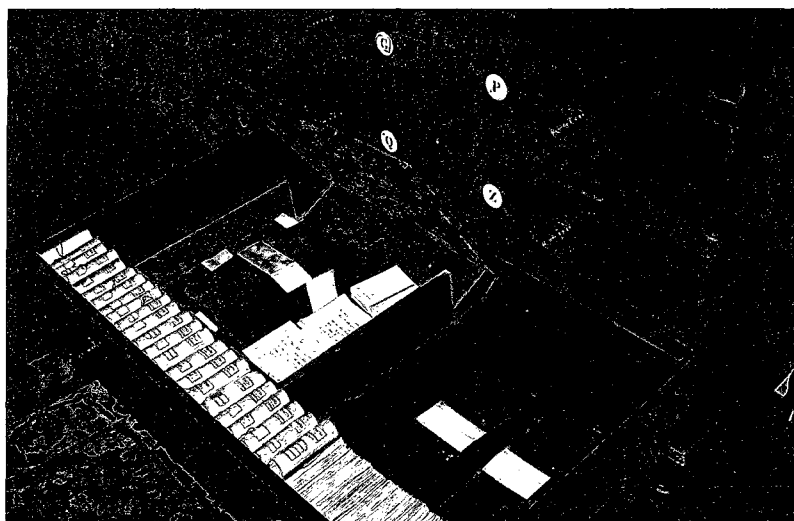
Figure 4.7. Grolier sheaf catalog, fourth drawer. Photograph by
Fernando Peña of the Grolier Club.

The Sheaves

The Grolier Club's catalog has 249 sheaves, each measuring about 5 inches wide

and 3.5 inches tall. A sheaf is housed in each slot except for the last row of the third

drawer. This row has only six sheaves, giving the third drawer a total of sixty-six, while

the first two drawers have eighty sheaves each. The fourth drawer has twenty-three

sheaves. Each sheaf has a paperboard front and back cover and a vellum spine. Almost

all of the covers are grayish brown (resembling unbleached paperboard), though a few

sheaves have glossy mottled blue paper covering the paperboard. All the unused covers

stored in the fourth drawer are the latter, blue type. Figure 4.8. shows a gray-brown

sheaf; the blue covers are visible in figure 4.7.
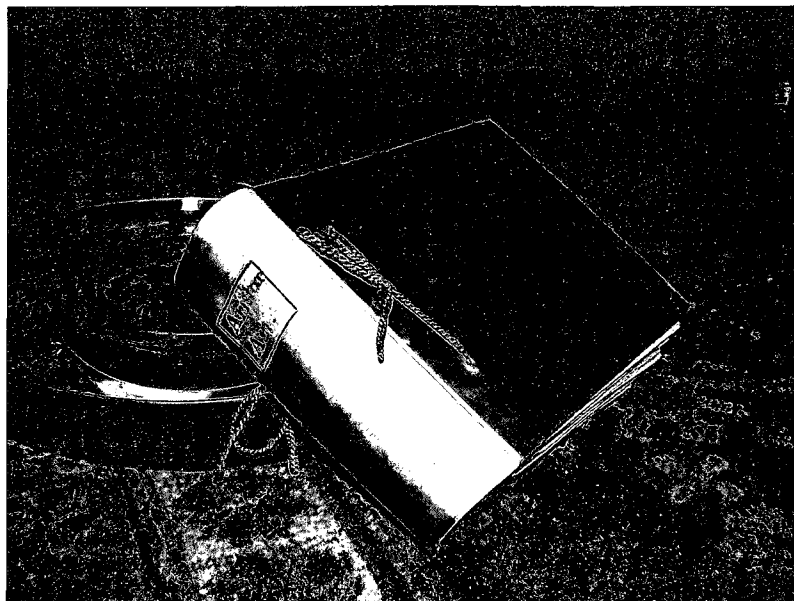
Figure 4.8. "Aristox. - Ash." sheaf from the Grolier sheaf catalog.
Photograph by the author.

As seen in figure 4.8., the sheaves were bound with a side-stitch or stab binding:

two holes were drilled or punched through the left-hand margin of the front and back

cover and the slips between, and a stiff brown string was pulled through these holes and

tied into a bow on the front cover. While this binding is durable and allows the catalog to

be updated relatively easily, it can be inflexible at least to the modern user. To avoid

straining the string bindings, the user must peer inside most sheaves.

Each sheaf contains between approximately 125 and 180 slips. A label was

pasted on the spine to indicate the alphabetic range of the records contained within a

particular sheaf.[5] The initial capitals on each label were typeset but any additional letters were added by hand. For example, the first sheaf has the label "A___/Adl"; the "A"s were typeset and the underline and "dl" were handwritten. Figure 4.9., an overhead view of the first drawer's sheaves, displays several spine labels.

Figure 4.9. Grolier sheaf catalog, view of sheaves in first drawer. Photograph by Fernando Peña of the Grolier Club.

This general rule has two exceptions. The sheaves containing the records for Spencer's extensive Bible collection bear completely typeset labels – e.g. "Biblia" and "Bibles" – though the words "Nov. Test." for "Novum Testamentum" were handwritten on the relevant spine labels. The second exception is the labeling on the anonymous tracts in the fourth drawer; these labels were all typeset "Tracts/Anonymous." The anonymous tracts have an additional label on the spine bottom, stating the alphabetical

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5. A few spines appear to be missing their labels; instead of labels, these spines have label-sized patches that are paler than the rest of their vellum spines.

range included in each sheaf. The first letters of these labels were typeset while the additional letters were handwritten.

The third drawer presents one of the catalogs' many puzzles. Logically, the final sheaves in the drawer should contain entries filed under the last letters of the alphabet. However, the last twenty-four sheaves appear to represent a new cataloging effort. These sheaves comprise a twenty-volume "New Catalogue" and four-sheaf set "4 Sections of Supplements Not Incorporated in the General Catalogue." The first sheaf in the New Catalogue bears the label "New Cat." handwritten in ink at the spine's top, directly on the vellum and above an alphabetic label identical to the labels used on all other spine labels. "New Cat." almost certainly signified "New Catalogue." The next nineteen sheaves span the alphabet and seem to continue the New Catalogue. The last four sheaves, "4 Sections of Supplements Not Incorporated in the General Catalogue," are referred to as "Supplementary Sheets" in this thesis.

The New Catalogue resembles a smaller version of the General Catalogue,[6] covering the alphabet from "A" to "Vis./Z." in its twenty booklets. Bibliographical records in the New Catalogue describe books that apparently were accessioned after General Catalogue books were accessioned. The New Catalogue sheaves differ from the General Catalogue in that the first slip in each New Catalogue sheaf briefly states the

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6. In this thesis, "General Catalogue" describes the sheaves in the Grolier catalog's first three drawers, minus the twenty-four-sheaf "New Catalogue" detailed here. I have retained the British spelling. The label "4 Sections of Supplements Not Incorporated in the General Catalogue" implies that the term "General Catalogue" should contain all the sheaves except for the final four; however, it is simpler to refer to the main body of the Grolier sheaf catalog as the "General Catalogue," the next twenty as the "New Catalogue," and the final four sheaves as the "Supplementary Sheets."

alphabetic range included that particular sheaf. In contrast, the General Catalogue sheaves delve directly into bibliographic description; their first slips list either a book description or cross-reference.

The four sheaves that comprise the Supplemental Sheets have two spine labels: an upper label stating "4 Sections of Supplements Not Incorporated in the General Catalogue" and a bottom label that differs with each of the four sheaves. The first lower label states "Sec. 1 A-C"; the second, "Sec. 2 D-L"; the third, "Sec. 3 M-R"; and the fourth, "Sec. 4 S-Z." Like the New Catalogue, the Supplemental Sheets resemble the General Catalogue, as they contain bibliographic records and cross-references.

These two additional catalogs and unfiled slips raise questions about how Spencer's sheaf catalog was maintained. One of the sheaf catalog's obvious benefits is that one can revise it relatively easily. There is no need for a "new" or "supplementary" catalog, though Spencer's librarian might have been grappling with a backlog, a burden that has afflicted catalogers of every era. If so, the librarians[7] may have had a backlog to their backlog, as the catalog has both a New Catalogue and the Supplementary Sheets – and these backlogs do not include the unbound slips found in the fourth drawer.

The additional catalogs and unfiled slips also expose a weakness in Spencer's system and in the sheaf catalog format. Perhaps his librarians felt that updating the catalog by interfiling new slips was too onerous: one had to untie the sheaf, remove either the front or back board and enough slips to reach the desired location, string the

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7. As described in Chapter Three, Spencer had two librarians, Tomasso de Ocheda and George Appleyard, who served consecutively. Several other hands can be seen in the slips, suggesting that many others were involved in maintaining the sheaf catalogs.

new slip through, replace the removed slips and board, and then tie the string. Instead of adding slips to the existing catalog, his librarians either created new sheaves or left the unfiled slips in stacks.

The sheaf binding is one of the main differences between Spencer's catalog and the "Leyden" featured in Chapter Two. Because university catalogs, even in the nineteenth century, were updated frequently, university librarians needed to insert, amend, and remove slips with physical ease. The Leyden and sheaf catalogs that used metal hardware were easier to manipulate than the string binding of Spencer's sheaves.

<center>The Rylands Sheaf Catalog</center>

The Chest

The Rylands sheaf catalog is a near twin to the Grolier catalog, as the two have almost identical inner and outer forms. The two catalogs differ on a few, significant grounds. The Rylands chest has only three drawers, whereas the Grolier chest has four. The slips for both catalogs appear to have been composed by different people. Some types of handwriting occur in both catalogs; but the hand of Spencer's first librarian, Ocheda, does not appear at all in the Rylands catalog.

Like the Grolier catalog, the Rylands chest has a handle on each side, was made of a polished, dark mahogany-like wood, and has three large, counter-weighted drawers with wooden slots to hold the sheaves. It also has ivory discs on the three drawers to guide the sheaves' alphabetic organization. Both chests have similar dimensions. While the Rylands chest seems to be one unit rather than a chest resting on a stand, like the Grolier catalog, it may also be two separate pieces.

Unlike the Grolier chest, the Rylands piece is slightly more ornate, with small onlaid wood lozenges on the chest's front and sides, directly above each leg. The metal handles on the chest's sides are nickel, steel, or a similar silver-colored metal rather than brass. In addition, the drawer fronts have raised panels while the Grolier's drawer fronts are flat.

The Rylands chest also lacks the fourth, supply drawer; instead, a narrow shelf-like piece joins the four legs several inches from the ground. This shelf might provide structural support: while the Rylands chest is as tall as the Grolier chest, it is missing the fourth drawer, which may help strengthen the relatively thin legs both chests have. Thus, the lower shelf may help stabilize the Rylands chest by absorbing some of the pressure caused by the heavy drawers. A photograph of the Rylands catalog appears in figure 4.10.
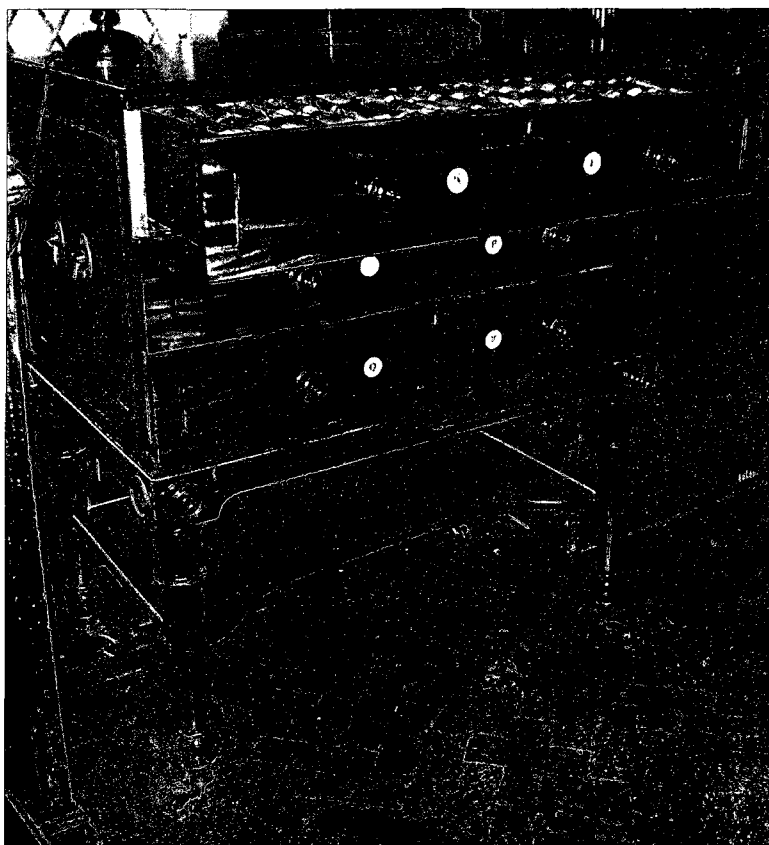
Figure 4.10. Three-quarter view of the Rylands sheaf catalog. Photograph by the author.

The Sheaves

Unlike the Grolier catalog, which has 249 sheaves, the Rylands catalog has 236

sheaves. The first four slots are empty (perhaps to ensure that the sheaves are filed in the

appropriate alphabetically labeled drawer). Although the number of sheaves differs, the

catalogs may still have the same number of slips. First, the Rylands catalog does not

have the twenty-volume New Catalogue. The slips collected to form the Grolier

catalog's New Catalogue were incorporated into the Rylands's General Catalogue.

Second, several Rylands sheaves are thicker on average than the Grolier sheaves are,

implying that some Rylands volumes contain more slips than Grolier ones do.

Frequently, the slips in each catalog do not match. For example, the first slip in the Grolier sheaf labeled "Anu./Aq." is for a work by Anville entitled *Proposition d'une me'sure de la teste dont il resulte une diminution considerable dans sa circoference sure les paralleses* (1735).[8] In the Rylands sheaf labeled "Anu./Aq." the first slip regards a different Anville title; *Proposition d'une me'sure de la teste* is the twentieth slip in the corresponding Rylands sheaf. The slip for the Romansch-language Bible printed by Andrea Pfeffer in 1719 is the first slip in the Grolier sheaf labeled "Biblia et/Test. Vet." but appears about one-third into the corresponding Rylands sheaf.

While the Rylands catalog does have a four-volume set of sheaves labeled "Sheets Recently Added but Not Incorporated in General Catalogue," even these slips do not match the Grolier catalog's similarly labeled four-volume "4 Sections of Supplementary Sheets Not Incorporated in the General Catalogue." At least one slip filed in the latter set of sheaves was incorporated into the Rylands chest's General Catalogue.

The Rylands sheaves are bound with vellum-backed boards; the boards are covered with glossy mottled blue paper. A few of the Grolier sheaves have these covers, though most are bound with brown-gray boards, also with vellum binding. However, as noted earlier, the additional boards stored in the Grolier chest's fourth drawer match the blue covers used for the Rylands sheaves.

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8. In this chapter, printing dates for each book appear in parenthesis.

The Grolier Sheaf Catalog

Based on the handwriting found in the slips, it is nearly certain that Spencer's first librarian, Tommaso de Ocheda, began the Grolier sheaf catalog and produced most of its slips.[9] The italic handwriting that dominates the Grolier catalog matches examples of Ocheda's handwriting found in the Spencer manuscript collections at the Rylands. In a short letter dated September 4, 1807, Ocheda wrote that he "presents his compliments to Mr. Dibdin, and is very obliged to him for the kindness" of Dibdin in sending a "learned dissertation" to Spencer House. The handwriting also surfaces in a list of books included in a July 22, 1812 letter from Spencer to Dibdin. Both specimens exactly match the italic handwriting found in most of the Grolier sheaf catalog entries. Therefore, Ocheda, Spencer's first known librarian, prepared most of the bibliographic entries in the Grolier sheaf catalog.

An example of Ocheda's handwriting, taken from a slip in the Grolier sheaf catalog, appears in figure 4.11. The writer of the heading "Arthur" has not yet been identified.

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9. Christie's also names Ocheda as the Grolier catalog's main contributor. Christie's, *Auction Catalog*.
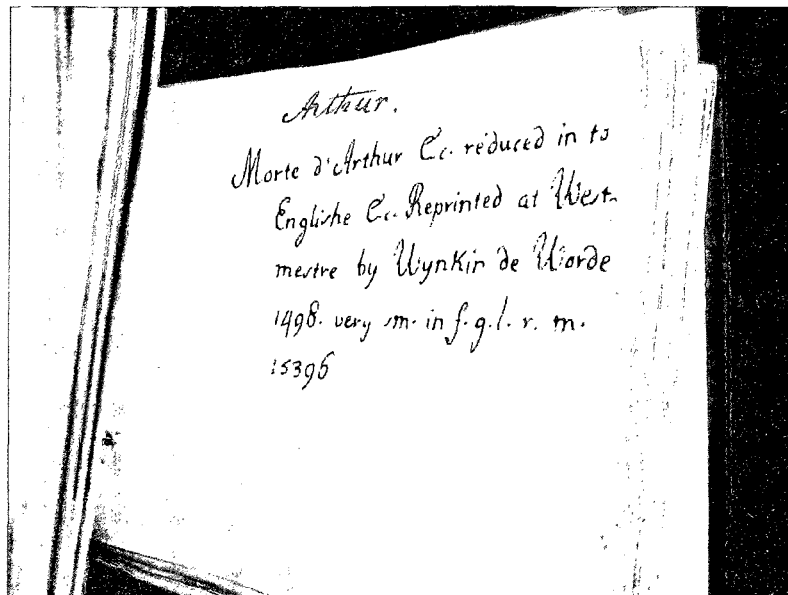
Figure 4.11. Grolier sheaf catalog slip, showing Tommaso de Ocheda's handwriting. Photograph by the author.

A few contemporaneously written comments may describe Ocheda's involvement in the sheaf catalog. Spencer complained about the disorder Ocheda generated as he worked on this lengthy task: in a letter to Dibdin, he described the catalog as "that interminable work" and Ocheda's room as "that inextricable chaos."[10]

Lister also wrote that one of Ocheda's tasks was to compile a "manuscript catalog intended to prevent the ordering of duplicates."[11] Lister's doctoral dissertation notes that Ocheda "probably compiled a short-title manuscript catalogue, which Spencer kept with him when away from London to ensure that duplicates were not ordered."[12] As Chapter

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10. Lister, "George John, 2nd Earl Spencer and His 'Librarian,'" 94.

11. Ibid. In this hypothetical scenario, Spencer or someone acting as his book-buying agent, such as Dibdin, Appleyard, or Ocheda, would take a sheaf catalog on a book-buying tour.

12. Lister, "Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1776-1847, and 'the Bibliomania,'" Chapter 6, 2.

Five describes, the Rylands holds several catalogs, many of which Spencer handwrote. Only one catalog, the Grolier sheaf catalog, contains Ocheda's handwriting.

However, the catalogs that Lister was describing may not be the sheaf catalogs. Neither sheaf catalog is a short-title catalog; each gives long-form titles and frequently provides not only full titles but also extensive information about each work. Lister did not state where he discovered this information and it is therefore difficult to determine which catalog he was describing.

At least four writers contributed to the Grolier sheaf catalog, as it contains at least four distinct types of handwriting. As noted earlier, some slips serve as a type of bibliographical cross-section, offering examples of many different hands on one single slip. While most of the General Catalogue records were written in Ocheda's simple, unpolished italic style, the New Catalogue and Supplementary Sheets have many records in copperplate script. Ocheda's italic script does not appear in New Catalogue or Supplementary Sheets records.

Only one other hand can be definitively identified. Spencer's handwriting, distinctive and often illegible, can be seen in several manuscript and archive collections held by the Rylands; it also appears in his sheaf catalogs, though usually in cross-reference slips, as corrections to Ocheda's entries, and as notes on book and author entry slips. The latter type of note appears to instruct to Spencer's librarian or even to himself to generate a cross-reference slip for a particular title. For example, figure 4.12., the Grolier slip for John Bourchier Berner's[13] *Arthur of Brytayn: The History of the Moost*

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13. The Grolier slip misspells the authors name as "Barners."

Noble and Valiant Knight Arthur of Lytell Brytayne (ca. 1550), accession number 15400,

includes a checkmark and the words "Arthur of Brytain" in Spencer's handwriting. Filed

alphabetically under "Arthur" is a subject cross-reference slip for Arthur of Brytayn,

accession number 15400, written in Ocheda's hand. Unfortunately because there is no

information regarding the sheaf catalogs' creation and maintenance, the relationship

between these two slips is hypothetical.
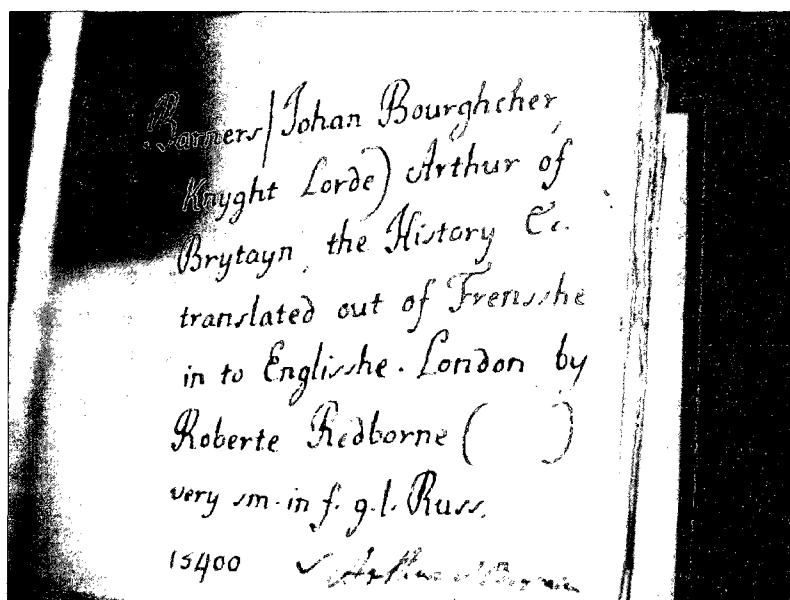
**Figure 4.12. Slip for Arthur of Brytayn, Grolier sheaf catalog.
Photograph by the author.**

It is also highly probable that George Appleyard, who succeeded Ocheda as

Spencer's librarian, contributed to the sheaf catalogs. The Spencer and Dibdin

manuscript collections held by the Rylands do not include any examples of Appleyard's

handwriting; thus, while it is extremely likely that Appleyard continued the catalogs,

comparing examples of his handwriting to handwriting found in the sheaf catalogs will

help clarify whether he in fact contributed to either catalog. Other repositories such as

the British Library and the Northamptonshire Record Office may have documents written by Appleyard and possibly by other Spencer family employees. Because many other unidentified hands appear in both catalogs, future research must therefore include reviewing manuscript collections that may contain handwriting of any other clerical employees of Spencer.

The Rylands Catalog

This study of the Rylands sheaf catalog did not uncover any examples of Ocheda's handwriting. In fact, none of the handwriting found in the Rylands sheaf catalog could be identified. Examining additional Spencer manuscript collections regarding both George John, the second Earl Spencer, and his descendants, may help identify the hands that appear in the Rylands catalog as well as the unknown hands that appear in the Grolier slips.

When Were the Catalogs Created?

If Spencer's sheaf catalogs had been destroyed, we might never have known they existed. Except for a letter written by an auction house agent, the catalogs are not mentioned in the Rylands archives. As this thesis has explained, few scholarly works discuss the sheaf catalogs and almost none of the popular magazine and news stories about Spencer's library mention them. Because the catalogs are noted only fleetingly in the historical record, any attempts to determine (1) when either catalog was created and (2) the period when either catalog was maintained – i.e., updated and revised – requires circumstantial evidence: namely, the handwriting used in the particular catalog.

The Grolier sheaf catalog may have been initiated as early as 1790, the year

Spencer hired Ocheda, as Ocheda's handwriting fills most of the Grolier catalog's slips.

Until he retired in 1807, Spencer probably had insufficient time to devise and execute the

sheaf catalog on his own. It is probable that, given Ocheda's background as a scholarly

librarian trained in continental Europe and that his handwriting prevails, Ocheda would

have started the sheaf catalog.[14] Ocheda retired in 1818 and returned to Italy, ending his

sheaf catalog contributions. This chronology places the catalog's inception far earlier

than circa 1821-1825, the dates posited by Christie's.[15]

Several other hands appear in the Grolier slips; occasionally a single slip contains

several types of handwriting. It is highly likely that George Appleyard, as Spencer's

second librarian, continued at least one of the sheaf catalogs, continuing its life well into

the generations after George John's death. Identifying these hands may help determine

the length of the Grolier catalog's active life, that is, the period during which it was

actively maintained.

Estimating the creation date for the Rylands sheaf catalog is more problematic, as

none of the hands have been identified. However, the catalog exhibits signs that it was

created after most of the Grolier catalog's sheaves were completed. The Rylands slips

have far fewer corrections and types of handwriting than the Grolier slips do, suggesting

that the former catalog was prepared by copying Grolier slips after the latter were

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14. Ocheda may have implemented a cataloging plan devised by someone else; who "invented" Spencer's sheaf catalog is still unknown.

15. Christie's, Auction Catalog.

corrected and annotated. The latter theory receives support from the observation that the slips included in one entire Rylands sheaf[16] were very likely written by a single hand. The corresponding Grolier sheaf shows a mixture of hands in addition to many corrections and annotations not present in the Rylands sheaf; these corrections and annotations were incorporated into the Rylands entries. Another relevant factor is that the Rylands catalog lacks the many-layered backlog present in the Grolier catalog; the slips that serve as the Grolier's New Catalogue were incorporated into the Rylands's General Catalogue.

Thus, the Rylands sheaf catalog may have been created near the end of the Grolier catalog's active life. The former still has unfiled slips, though these amount to less than the Grolier catalog's backlog. Perhaps the person or people who copied the Grolier slips for the Rylands catalog decided to file the New Catalogue with the General Catalogue, something the Grolier's catalogers should have done.

The Mobility of Spencer's Sheaf Catalogs

Equipping the chests with side handles suggests that Spencer may have intended to transport them occasionally, perhaps on his post-retirement bibliographical tour through Europe. Because Spencer had such an extensive collection as well as a voracious desire for books, bringing a library catalog would have helped prevent acquiring duplicates.[17]

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16. As the Methodology section in Chapter One, describes, this study examined the entire "Aristox." sheaf in both the Rylands and Grolier catalogs.

17. Even if he used a checklist of his collection on book-buying tours, Spencer still often bought duplicates in at least two situations: he occasionally bought entire collections and he

However, it is unlikely that either chest could be lifted using the handles, as they seem far too thin to bear the chests' weight. In fact, the Rylands sheaf catalog shows indelible evidence that it is exceptionally heavy: a fine-line crack has developed immediately below the third drawer and to the right of the front left leg; this scar is visible in figure 4.13. In addition, both catalogs have side handles, raising the question of which catalog Spencer would have brought on his travels.
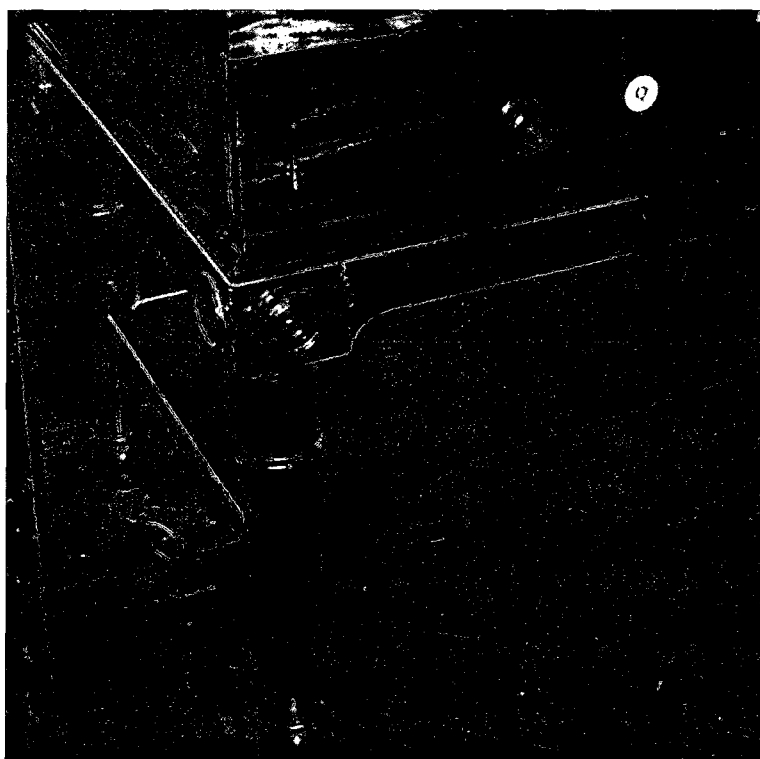
Figure 4.13. Detail of Rylands sheaf catalog hairline crack. Photograph by the author.

Spencer also had several other library catalogs in the much more compact book form. If he did take a list of his collection with him, it is likelier that Spencer took one or

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often wished to replace an incomplete or less-than-perfect copy with a more desirable version. In either case, he usually sold the lesser copy.

more of these catalogs; they were far easier to transport and use for inventory purposes and they were much less likely to be damaged than the chest, with its lustrous mahogany finish. While the book-form catalogs focus on the antiquary books in Spencer's collection – his Aldines or early incunables, for example – Spencer was likelier to buy such books on a trip to Europe. He would not need to know the titles that were recently printed in England; Spencer would probably buy such books in England or would at least authorize such purchases from his homes in London or Northamptonshire, where he could consult his sheaf catalog.

Moreover, it is unlikely that Spencer intended the sheaf catalog to serve as a library inventory. The catalog contains hundreds of cross-references, and such slips would only impede an inventory's purpose – informing the user which items were (and by omission which items were not) in a collection. One of Spencer's book-form catalogs would have been much more compact and transportable than his sheaf catalogs. These catalogs are described in Chapter Five.

Perhaps Spencer did not need to bring along any catalog on the bibliographic tour he made through Europe in 1819-1820. Edwards noted that Spencer knew his library so well – at least its incunables and first editions – that when he traveled to Naples, most likely to see the Duke of Cassano-Serra's library, Spencer "made a list of the principal duplicates which the Cassano acquisition would cause."[18] Christie's suggested that

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18. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* 416.

Spencer might have used his sheaf catalog to compile this listing but did not provide evidence that either catalog traveled with him.[19]

Locations of the Sheaf Catalogs

No evidence regarding the chests' locations during Spencer's lifetime has emerged. We can only be sure that the Rylands sheaf catalog was at Althorp by 1892 at the latest, as documentation regarding Enriqueta Rylands's purchase mentions a three-drawer chest. This documentation includes an August 1892 article on the Spencer Library and is illustrated with a photoengraving of the Rylands chest. Where the Grolier sheaf catalog was kept is still unknown.

For this period, the early 1890s, only one of the catalogs can be definitively located. A letter from one of Enriqueta's book agents sought confirmation that the three-drawer catalog, now at the Rylands, would be included in the sale. The catalog was also depicted in an engraved illustration that appeared in an August 1892 article.[20] The few other accounts that mention a sheaf catalog did not describe the catalog sufficiently to identify which catalog was being discussed. No publication or letter yet uncovered has described a four-drawer catalog; thus the Grolier sheaf catalog's whereabouts have still not been uncovered.

The Rylands sheaf catalog is referenced in a letter from Alexander Balderstone Railton, an agent for Henry Sotheran & Co., the bookselling firm that negotiated Mrs.

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19. Christie's, Auction Catalog.

20. "The Spencer Library at Althorp just Purchased by Mrs Rylands of Manchester," *Black and White* (August 20, 1892): 210.

Rylands's purchase of the Spencer collection.[21] Railton's letter, dated July 7, 1892,

asked for confirmation that the three-drawer catalog would be included in the library's

sale. It does not discuss a four-drawer catalog.

Included in Railton's papers is an article printed in *Black and White* on August

20, 1892. This article presents the only nineteenth century illustration of the sheaf

catalog to have emerged; several sheaves were pulled out to show the drawers' contents.

The illustration, reproduced in figure 4.14., also firmly demonstrates that the Rylands

catalog was at Althorp by August 1892 at the latest.

A WARM CORNER IN THE "OLD BOOK ROOM," ALTHORP, SHOWING PART OF THE CARD CATALOGUE
IN THE DRAWERS AND DR. DIBDIN'S FOUR VOLUMES OF MANUSCRIPT DESCRIPTION
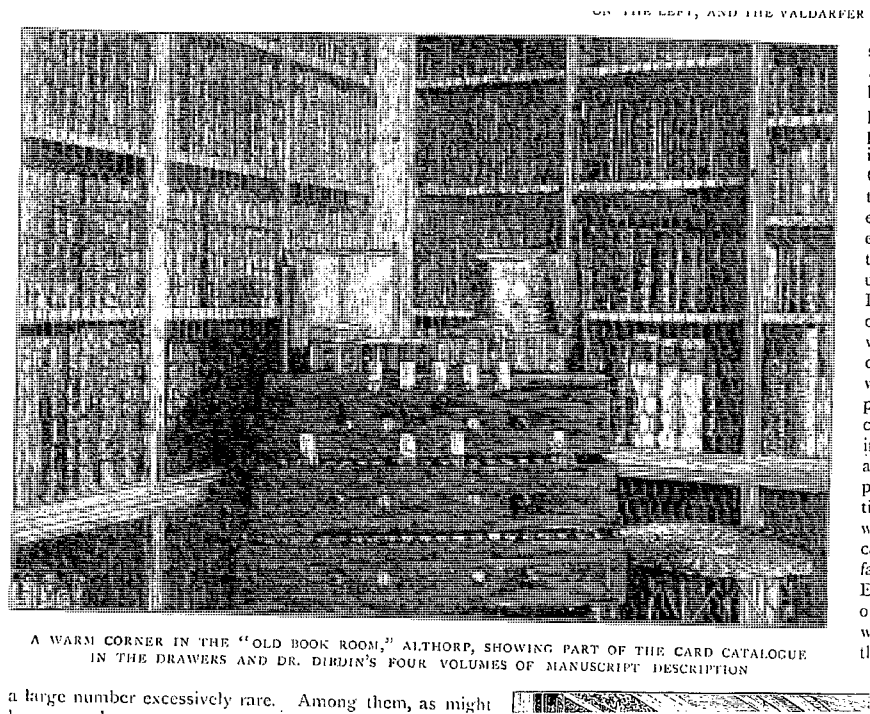
Figure 4.14. Illustration of the Rylands sheaf catalog, August 1892.[22]
Reproduction courtesy of the John Rylands Library of Manchester.

21. Alexander Balderstone Railton to recipient, July 7, 1892, in Alexander Balderstone Railton Papers, ABR/1, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

22. "The Spencer Library at Althorp just Purchased by Mrs Rylands of Manchester," 211.

It is not clear what the phrase "Dr. Dibdin's four volumes of manuscript description" (seen in the caption in figure 4.14.) means. The large books arranged atop the sheaf catalog probably come from the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, but they do not match either understanding of the adjective "manuscript." The *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* neither is handwritten nor regards manuscripts (except for a few exceptions).

Newspaper accounts from August 1892, when articles appeared frequently in both England and the U.S. regarding Enriqueta Rylands's purchase of the Althorp library, show that the Rylands chest was mobile at least within Althorp. Perhaps the metal handles fixed on each side of the chest helped one to maneuver the catalog; they seem too weak to bear the chest's weight. Spencer's librarian – and Spencer himself – could then move the catalog from room to room in his vast libraries, closer to the books needed.

Spencer's Numerical Index, described in Chapter Five, lists at least four specific locations where one would find particular books at Spencer House – the Caxton case, Aldine case, Parliamentary Room, and Permanent Library. Althorp had even more shelving areas: the Raphael Room, Billiard Room, Marlborough Room, Long Library are just a few. Spencer and his bibliophile contemporaries already had portable catalogs – i.e., ledgers – and he may have wished that his expansive sheaf catalog also be as moveable as possible.

The August 8, 1892 *Times* (London) found Spencer's sheaf catalog in Althorp's Long Library.[23] When the article's author visited Althorp, a sheaf catalog was located in

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23. "Althorp and Its Library," 7.

the Long Library, the enormous room adjacent to the drawing room. The writer spoke admiringly of Spencer's sheaf catalog: "Then comes the last and most beautiful room of all, the Long Library. Here, in a wheeled case, is the manuscript catalogue, perhaps the first of the 'slip catalogues' of which are now so general."[24]

The author did not mention how many drawers the chest had; therefore we cannot definitively state which catalog was described. However, no other catalog appears in the article and the few writings that mention the sheaf catalog only discuss one catalog. By the time the *Black and White* article was written (it appeared in the August 20, 1892 issue), the Rylands catalog was displayed in the Old Book Room. Thus, it is possible that (1) the Rylands catalog was the only sheaf catalog used at the Althorp library, (2) the Grolier sheaf catalog was kept elsewhere, and (3) the Rylands catalog was moved from room to room. Research into Spencer family records regarding Althorp's maintenance and other issues may uncover relevant information, in addition to possibly providing examples of other handwriting found in the sheaf catalogs.

In *Libraries and Founders of Libraries*, Edwards provided the most extensive description of Spencer's sheaf catalog found in any published literature. Edwards discussed the sheaf catalog in the manner one may describe a novel, intriguing object:

> The title of each book is written on a small square slip, on stiff
> paper, and those slips themselves form the catalogue, the vellum
> covers of which have tagged laces, to keep the slips as firmly in
> their place as the ordinary leaves of a book.[25]

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24. Ibid.

25. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* 428.

He also mentioned the Numerical Index, explaining how one uses both tools to find books in the Althorp libraries. Even though Edwards had served as a librarian with the British Museum, among other institutions, and had written at length about library history, he had never seen anything like Spencer's catalog.[26] With perspicacity, Edwards observed that "Lord Spencer's books were always thoroughly at his command."[27]

In describing Spencer's catalog system, Edwards did not use the term "card catalog." This term was beginning to be used in the United States in the 1860s;[28] the term "sheaf catalog" most likely emerged later, in the late 1800s. Instead, Edwards called the sheaf catalog an "Alphabetical Catalogue,"[29] noting that as of 1864, it comprised 206 small volumes – far less than either the Rylands or Grolier catalog today has. His book provides a rough facsimile of one of the slips.

Even though Edwards provides a detailed account of Spencer's sheaf catalog, he mentions only one chest. In addition, Edwards's description lacks sufficient information to determine if he were examining the three-drawer Rylands catalog or the four-drawer

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26. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries*.

27. Ibid., 430.

28. Abbot, "The New Catalogues of the College Library," 33-40.

29. Spencer himself may have called the sheaf catalog his "Alphabetical Catalogue." In a letter to Dibdin, Spencer wrote that he consulted his Alphabetical Catalogue regarding a book Dibdin mentioned in a previous letter. Spencer must have been pleased with his cataloging system, as in his letter he even mentioned the title's accession number, 9437, to Dibdin. (George John Spencer to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, January 21, 1813, in Letters of George John, 2nd Earl Spencer, to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, Spencer Eng MS 71, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester).

Grolier catalog. We therefore cannot be sure which catalog was kept in the Althorp

library in 1864 during Edwards's visit.

Brenda Scragg consulted the Rylands sheaf catalog to produce a detailed study of

the Spencer books Mrs. Rylands bought.[30] According to Scragg, Earl Spencer (most

likely the fifth earl, who sold the library) "retained" the sheaf catalog that the Grolier

Club later purchased.[31] In another publication, she noted that one catalog was at Spencer

House and the other in London and that the "Althorp catalogue came to Manchester with

the books."[32] Unfortunately, it is not clear where Scragg obtained this information or

where the Spencer family kept the four-drawer catalog.

Christie's has no additional information on the item's provenance.[33] The 1995

catalog description provides a brief yet deeply informative description of Spencer, his

library, and his catalog; however, the description offers inferences and not definitive

statements regarding the catalog's possible locations.[34] The auction catalog suggests that

the Rylands sheaf catalog may have come from Althorp, though it does not provide

support for this possibility.

Another potential source for insight into the Grolier catalog's provenance was the

London-based antiquarian book dealer, Bernard L. Quaritch Ltd. (Quaritch). Quaritch,

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30. Scragg, "Mrs Rylands and the Spencer Library," 217-223.

31. Ibid., 220.

32. Scragg, "John Rylands and Enriqueta Augustina Tennant Rylands," 394.

33. Meg Ford email message to the author, November 28, 2008.

34. Christie's, Auction Catalog.

acting as an agent for Althorp, had consigned the sheaf catalog for sale at Christie's. The

catalog had been stored in the book dealer's archives room for several years before

arriving at Christie's. Before it moved to Quaritch, the catalog had been stored in the

muniments room at Althorp, where the Spencer family kept its archives. However,

Nicholas Poole-Wilson, a Quaritch director who had seen the sheaf catalog *in situ* at

Althorp, could not confirm that the item had always been at Althorp.[35]

Because the Rylands chest is slightly more ornate, it is possible that it was kept at

Spencer's London residence before it was moved to Althorp. Spencer House was an

opulent showcase, built to host large, lavish parties and other social events as well as

family gatherings. Indeed, when long-term financial stresses compelled a subsequent

Earl Spencer to market the property, the relatively small size of the bedrooms upstairs

versus the expansive staterooms on the first and second floors made Spencer House less

attractive to prospective purchasers.[36] Given the property's splendor, it is a reasonable

assumption that the fancier chest resided in London while the simpler one was at Althorp.

However, Spencer spent a good portion of the year – about five months – at

Spencer House.[37] This property, too, was extravagant and luxurious, but on a larger

scale. Like his many of his peers, Spencer lavished money and attention on his country

35. Nicholas Poole-Wilson, email message to the author, December 9, 2008.

36. Friedman and Fiennes, *Spencer House.* Spencer House was carefully and
extensively restored in the 1990s. It now can be rented for weddings, parties, and other events.
(Spencer House Ltd., "Spencer House History," http://www.spencerhouse.co.uk/history.htm
[accessed August 19, 2008].)

37. For example, see Letters of George John, 2nd Earl Spencer, to Thomas Frognall
Dibdin, Spencer Eng MS 71, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

estate. This apparently typically British approach differed from European custom, which encouraged aristocrats to focus their funds and energies on their city properties, leaving their country homes far more austere than their British counterparts did.[38] Newspaper stories written during Spencer's lifetime or shortly after extol the grandeur of both Spencer's collection and its surroundings. Thus, the three-drawer chest may have been kept at Althorp while the four-drawer, Grolier catalog remained in London.

Additional details about the catalogs have not helped narrow the catalogs' probable homes. For example, the Grolier sheaf catalog has a fourth drawer, containing slips, vellum-backed covers (with blue boards, as found in the Rylands catalog), and string. The Rylands chest lacks these sheaf-making supplies. This supply drawer can imply that Spencer's librarian composed new bibliographic records using the Grolier catalog, perhaps making two slips at each time – one for each catalog.

However, comparing Rylands records against their matching Grolier records fails to support this possibility. Bibliographic slips held in the Rylands sheaves are in vastly different handwriting than the corresponding Grolier slips, strongly suggesting that separate people wrote the records. Thus, Spencer most likely did not have a centralized cataloging procedure, in which his librarian prepared two slips for each accession.

An additional characteristic of the Rylands slips has further clouded attempts to determine the two catalogs' relationship. The mistakes that pepper the Grolier slips are not repeated in the Rylands catalog; records in the latter catalog were composed with fluid handwriting that seems to have been executed without pauses or hesitations. In

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38. Ciro, "Country House Libraries in the Nineteenth Century," 89-98.

contrast, the Grolier slips – mainly the slips prepared by Ocheda – contain many crossed-through words, words inserted between lines, and similar signs of corrected misspellings, titles, author names and titles, and other information.

These differences hint that the Rylands catalog was prepared after the Grolier catalog was. First, the Rylands slips incorporate corrections made to the Grolier slips. Second, the Rylands catalog appears to have been prepared by a librarian other than Spencer's first librarian, Ocheda.

Even if the handwriting in the records were identical, Spencer's librarians – or at least Ocheda – worked both in London and at Althorp, depending upon Spencer's schedule. Thus if Spencer had two catalogs, one in London and one in Northamptonshire, Ocheda would have worked on both. While Spencer was serving the British government, he spent several months in London, usually returning to Althorp before Christmas. During the summer of 1803, Ocheda worked in the Spencer House libraries from 1:00 to 3:00; Spencer wrote to Dibdin that the latter could visit between these hours, when "Ocheda my Librarian is . . . found to be at home."[39]

Ocheda sometimes remained at Spencer House even when his employer was away. In 1807, Spencer retired from government service and began spending more time at Althorp, but Ocheda maintained London hours. For example, a June 1812 letter from

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39. George John Spencer to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, July 4, 1803, in Letters of George John, 2nd Earl Spencer, to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, Spencer Eng MS 71, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

Spencer notes that Ocheda would be at Spencer House from 11:00 to 2:00.[40] At least at Christmastime, Ocheda was at Althorp.

While it is unclear where either catalog was kept, we may presume that the Grolier catalog was compiled before the Rylands catalog was. First, most of the Grolier slips were prepared by Ocheda, Spencer's first librarian; while Ocheda's handwriting dominates the Grolier catalog, this study did not find any examples of his handwriting in the Rylands catalog. If the Rylands catalog were prepared during Ocheda's tenure, which began in 1790 and ended in 1818, one may reasonably assume that Ocheda's handwriting would appear at least sporadically, as he was the only librarian Spencer had before 1818.

Second, the Rylands slips contain few, if any, mistakes, blank spaces, edits by different hands, or discernable pauses in writing. Instead, these slips were written neatly and fluidly, implying that the writer or writers were copying from a model rather than cataloging directly from the books. Additional inferential evidence for this view is that the Rylands slips all bend in the same direction and have the same quantity and quality of gilding on the edges. The Grolier slips that occur consecutively in a particular sheaf seem, in contrast, to have been made at different times, as the papers in each sheaf show different degrees of wear. The Grolier slips also exhibit sudden changes in handwriting style, whereas a few of the Rylands sheaves were written entirely in the same handwriting. These characteristics imply that many of the Rylands sheaves were copied over a relatively short time from the Grolier sheaves.

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40. George John Spencer to Thomas Frognall Dibdin, June 22, 1812, in ibid.

Additional factors suggest that the Grolier catalog was created first. The Rylands catalog lacks the twenty-volume "New Catalogue" that the Grolier catalog has. The Rylands catalog does not have a separate "New Catalogue." Instead, the bibliographical records that comprise the New Catalogue were incorporated into the Rylands chest's General Catalogue; several slips that are contained in the Grolier's New Catalogue were in fact filed in the alphabetic General Catalogue sheaf appropriate for each slip. The Rylands catalog does have a backlog, labeled "Sheets Recently Added but Not Incorporated in General Catalogue." This backlog is much smaller than the Grolier's – four sheaves against the Grolier's twenty-four (twenty "New Catalogue" sheaves plus the four-volume Supplemental Sheets). The Rylands catalog has no unfiled slips while the Grolier catalog has several dozen. Additional research comparing the handwriting in the Supplemental Sheets, New Catalogue, and Sheets Recently Added may help determine who worked on these sheaves as well as the dates these sheaves were prepared.

<center>The Grolier and Rylands Slips[41]</center>

Methodology

Before delving into the slips' contents, it may be helpful to review the methodology followed in this study.[42] The first step in this methodology entailed examining Grolier slips systematically, following a simple pattern. The pattern required pulling the first sheaf, skipping the second; pulling the third sheaf, skipping the fourth

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41. Unless stated otherwise, slips discussed in this section come from the Grolier catalog.

42. Chapter One of this thesis presents a more thorough presentation of this methodology.

and fifth; pulling the sixth, skipping the seventh. Thus, the systematic sampling pattern involved skipping one sheaf and then two, skipping one sheaf and then two, until the Grolier catalog had been examined. The text on the first slip of each sheaf thus pulled was transcribed onto a Word table.

Some slips were cross-references instead of bibliographic records. I followed the cross-references to the bibliographic records they pointed to, transcribing the cross-reference and bibliographic information onto the table. Using this approach, this study examined ninety-two of the first-page sheaves selected as well as several more slips found by following cross-references.

The second step entailed looking up books in printed catalogs, namely the catalog of the Spencer collection published by the Rylands in 1899 (the Duff catalog) and Thomas Frognall Dibdin's seven-volume *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, which focuses on Spencer's incunabula and first editions. This study also searched the Rylands online public-access catalog (Rylands OPAC), WorldCat, and the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) for information about the books identified through this methodology. Although these searches did not solve every puzzle presented by the catalogs, together they helped decipher some sheaf abbreviations and uncovered new information.

The third step occurred at the Rylands Library in Manchester. There I prepared a second table comparing the Grolier slips to the Rylands slips, following the same sampling pattern. Where the sheaves differed, this study recorded the first slip in the corresponding Rylands sheaf, even though in many cases this slip did not match the first

slip in the corresponding Grolier sheaf; in these cases, I located and recorded the Rylands slip that did match, in addition to the first slip in the Rylands sheaf.

After this study began, it became clear that the books themselves would provide relevant and illuminating information. Occasionally, the slips included an abbreviation or symbol that could not be deciphered by searching the Duff catalog, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana,* Rylands OPAC, WorldCat, or ESTC. Handling the books referenced in the slips selected in this sampling might help decipher some of the many symbols and abbreviations found in the Grolier and Rylands catalogs. However, time limitations prevented the present study from expanding to include the actual books. This chapter describes areas for subsequent research, where the books themselves could contain the key to their bibliographic description.

The Grolier Slips

In the General Catalogue, each leaf or slip typically contains one record of a book, with the information written on the slip's recto and occasionally continuing onto the verso. Many slips, however, are subject reference slips that refer the searcher to one or more works on the particular subject. This feature is remarkable: Spencer was not using his catalog solely as an inventory list, as many contemporaneous book collectors did, or even as a location guide. Instead, Spencer's catalog was an early, low-tech search engine. His sheaf catalog allowed scholars and recreational readers alike to use multiple entry points – author, title, or subject – to find books, pamphlets, and other materials they may have wished to read.

Almost all the slips are written clearly and neatly, usually with all lines after the first line of information indented about 1 inch in a "hanging indentation." Slips in the New Catalogue and Supplementary Sheets do not follow this convention. Most bibliographic records (i.e., not the cross-reference slips) include the following information: author, if known or imputed; title, usually the long form; place of printing; printer name; year; physical description; and accession number. This last piece of information, which receives greater attention below, plays at least two roles: it identifies each work and provides a separate tool to locate each work.

Accession Numbers

The accession numbers present an especially intriguing aspect of Spencer's sheaf catalogs. Every slip examined, both bibliographical and subject classification-related, carries an accession number. Each book Spencer accessioned into his library bears its accession number, written in ink in the left-hand corner of the front board or front free endpaper of each book.[43] Spencer assigned one number to a work no matter how many volumes it had. He also assigned a single number to more than one work when works were bound together, though he may have used a numerical suffix to specify each individual work. Another notable feature is that whenever Spencer replaced one copy with another one (as he did frequently, whenever he bought a finer copy than the one he

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43. Scragg, "Mrs Rylands and the Spencer Library," 223; and Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts*, 77.

owned), he assigned the same accession number to the successor copy.[44] Therefore, the numbers are not necessarily chronological.

Spencer and his librarians used a "Numerical Index" to record accession numbers. This ledger is part of the Rylands institutional archives rather than the Spencer archives, as the Rylands used the Numerical Index to record uncataloged Spencer items, such as the *Catalogue of the Early Printed Books in the Library of Lord Spencer, Arranged under Printers*.[45] Next to each number is a code signifying the item's location. Chapter Five includes a more extensive discussion of the Numerical Index.

During initial research into the Grolier sheaf catalog, an additional and exciting aspect to the accession numbers surfaced, providing strong circumstantial evidence that the Rylands and Grolier catalogs contained matching entries. An early investigation involved searching the Rylands OPAC for Spencer books that were cataloged in the Grolier sheaf catalog. This search found that the Rylands shelfmarks (the library's unique identification numbers) nearly matched the Spencer accession numbers listed on the Grolier slips.[46]

While the Rylands does not catalog the Spencer collection separately from its other special collections, their OPAC does help one identify books that came from the Spencer library: such books with have a shelfmark that begins with a number rather than

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44. Ibid.

45. *Catalogue of Early Incunables in the Bibliotheca Spenceriana, Arranged under Printers,* Eng MS 64, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

46. The Rylands shelfmarks simply prefix each Spencer accession number with a forward-slash ("/"). For example, a Spencer accession number of 5520 would become Rylands shelfmark /5520.

a letter. All other special collection items cataloged at the Rylands have a shelfmark that begins with a letter. This difference arose because the Rylands adopted Earl Spencer's accession numbers as its own shelfmarks. Rylands catalogers must have obtained their shelfmarks from either their sheaf catalog or from the books themselves.

Slip Organization and Typical Content

The slips themselves are arranged alphabetically according to author's name or, if the book does not provide the author's name, by book title. Thus, in cataloging terms, the author's name or book's title served as an item's "main entry."[47] For example, an entry for John Bourchier Berners's *Arthur of Brytayn* apears with the author's last name first, followed by his first and middle names and personal title. Because the cataloger misspelled the author's name as "Barners," the slip was filed under the latter name rather than under Berners. A photograph of this slip appears as figure 4.12.

A vertical line ("|") separates the surname from the first name and the entire name is enclosed between parentheses. The book title is written after the closing parenthesis. To help a reader find this entry, the catalog includes a slip cross-referencing the "Arthur of Brytayn/See (Barners|" label.[48] Please see figure 4.13. for a photograph of this slip.

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47. Works may also have been filed using the Schlagwort concept discussed in Chapter Two.

48. There is no final parenthesis, only a vertical line. It is possible that the librarian intended to add the missing information later but neglected to; the full bibliographical record in Spencer's sheaf catalog includes the author's first name and personal title after the vertical line, with parentheses enclosing the author's complete name.
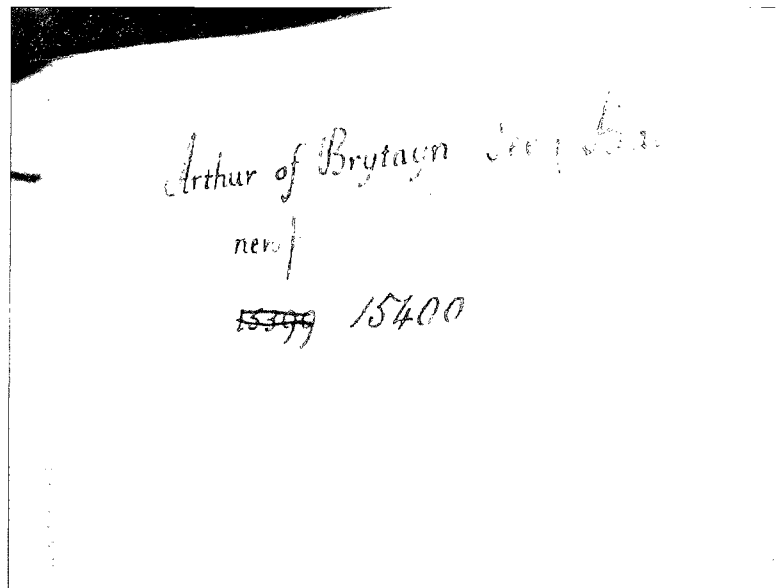
Figure 4.15. Arthur of Brytayn cross-reference slip, Grolier sheaf catalog. Photograph by author.

Spencer's librarians may have applied the *Schlagwort* concept, so that some

works were entered under their subject classification rather than their author name or

work title. For example, *Morte d'Arthur,* seen in figure 4.16., was filed under "Arthur."

Spencer's catalogers refashioned other titles so that the title highlighted a book's subject,

allowing the slip to be filed under the relevant subject but preserving most of the book's

title. For example, the "Trau./Tuf." sheaf in the General Catalogue sheaf includes the slip

for a work entitled *Instructions for Forrain Travell* [sic]. However, the heading on the

slip – the words under which the slip was alphabetized – refers to the work as *Travel*

(Instructions for foreign). By gently reworking the title, the librarian could file the slip

where a reader interested in travel might find it.
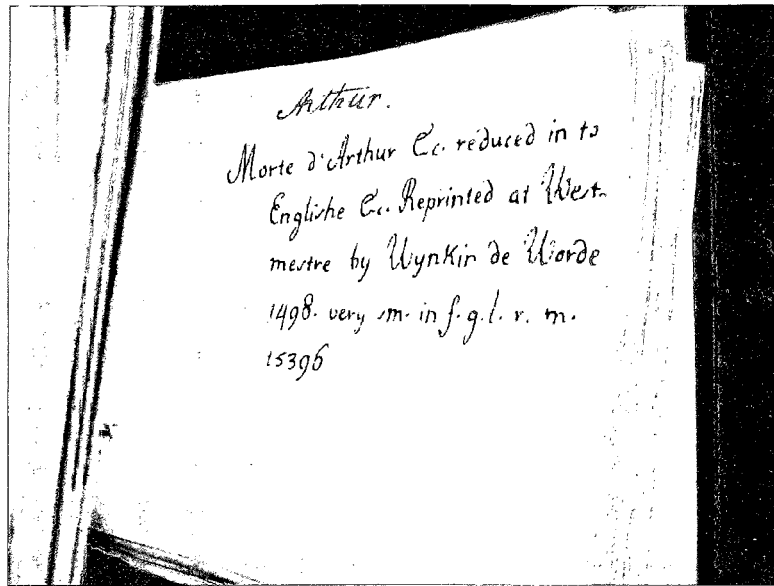
Figure 4.16. Slip for "Morte d'Arthur," filed under "Arthur."
Photograph by author.

A Group Effort

The "Forrain Travell" slip provides a subtle hint to the catalog's use and development. It is likely that two people prepared this record, as two hands are evident, suggesting that one person wrote the body and a second person inserted the reworked title above the body. The reworked title – "Travel (Instructions for foreign)" – was most likely added after the main body of the slip had been completed, as the reworked title seems to be squeezed in below the top edge of the slip. Most of the entries have a wider top margin, resembling the margin the slip would have had without the added heading. Similarly, two people composed the record for *Morte d'Arthur* filed under "Arthur," with "Arthur" appearing to have been added after the main record was written. Please see figure 4.16. for a photograph of this slip.

Many slips bear corrections, often in Spencer's hand. On other slips, a line was drawn through certain pieces of information, apparently to delete inaccurate words. The record for Leopoldo Cicognara's *Storia della scultura dal suo risorgimento in Italia sino al secolo di Napoleone* includes the following details after Cicognara's name: "Cavaliere de la corona de Ferro, Presidente della R. Accademia di Belle Arti in Venezia." This information was crossed out, perhaps because it was no longer accurate. Cicognara did serve as president of the Accademia delle Belle Arti (not "di Belle Arti" as in Spencer's sheaf catalog) beginning in 1808 but it is not clear how long he served in this position and if he were serving as such when the slip was prepared.[49] Similarly, on the slip for Charles Clémencet's *Histoire générale de Port-Royal depuis la reforme de l'Abbaïe* the words "Bénédictin de la Congregation de St. Maur" written after the author's name were crossed out. This information may have been discarded because Clémencet may have already left the Congregation de Saint Maur for Paris when his *Histoire* was printed.[50]

A slip for *The History of Jamaica* shows several layers of corrections. One hand wrote the main text comprising this bibliographic record. In the likeliest chronological order, someone else later wrote the word "Jamaica" at the slip's top margin, perhaps so that the slip could be filed under Jamaica. However, the slip was not filed under Jamaica; the slip was instead alphabetically filed under the author's name, "Long (Edw)," written by a third person. A fourth person wrote "Jamaica" below a checkmark (which is in turn

49. The Cicognara Project, "Leopoldo Cicognara Collection in the Vatican Library," http://www.cicognara.com/ (accessed August 16, 2008).

50. Patricius Schlager, "Charles Clémencet," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1908), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04011c.htm.

below the main text), and a fifth person offered an illegible cross-reference to another text.[51]

The *History of Jamaica* slip offers further evidence that Spencer's sheaf catalog was an ongoing project, in which several people – including Spencer – were actively involved. One can imagine Spencer's librarian generating a basic (and often detailed) bibliographical slip; another person reviewed the slip to ensure it could be filed so that readers could quickly find the books they desired. Yet another person could make notations on the slips regarding related books or subjects that might appeal to readers. While few of the slips have edits as multifarious as the *History of Jamaica*, this record allows us to envision the thought and effort behind Spencer's sheaf catalog.

Perhaps someone – most likely Spencer, as corrections occur frequently in his handwriting – regularly reviewed catalog entries, to correct misspellings, add information about works, and jot subject classifications relevant to certain entries. The Barners and *Morte d'Arthur* slips are two of several that strongly suggest that the catalog was often edited, frequently by Spencer himself.

Physical Description Abbreviations

The physical description typically includes the book's size, binding material and color, and any gilding or other special features, such as large paper. The catalogers used abbreviations such as "c" for calf, "m" for mottled (calf) or morocco,[52] "g.l." for gilt

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51. This cross-reference must also have been illegible to contemporaneous users of the sheaf catalog. The Rylands slip for Long's book reproduces the full Grolier slip except for the illegible information.

52. The context clearly implies whether the "m" stands for mottled or morocco.

leaves or letters, "l.p." for large paper, "Russ" for Russia, "ba" for bands, and "ri" for ribbons.

Some abbreviations that seem to regard a book's physical description remain undeciphered. For example, the record for Pérez Ginés de Hita, *Histoire chevaleresque des Maures de Grenade traduite de l'Espagnol . . .* includes a note that the work is in two volumes ("2vs.") and is "bo [or ba] in c." This latter observation may mean that the book was bound in calf, though all other slips examined in this study imply the word "bound" when stating the binding material: i.e., "m.c." means "(bound in) mottled calf" or "(bound in) marbled calf"; "blu. m." means "(bound in) blue morocco." Thus, "bo." meaning bound is redundant. Of course, if the note is "ba" instead of "bo," these conjectures are irrelevant.

Complicating this analysis is that the *Histoire chevaleresque des Maures* slip further describes the work as an octavo in brown calf ("in 8vo br. c."). Perhaps the cataloger added this last bit of information later, disregarding the earlier binding description, as the last piece of information repeats the type of leather binding.

The abbreviation "ba" appears in at least two slips examined in this study. George Suckling's *An Historical Account of the Virgin Islands in the West Indies* (1780) is an octavo, half-bound in brown calf ("8vo h.b. br. c."). Mattaeus Manning's *Aquae Minerales Omnibus Morbis Cronicis Medentur* (1745) is a quarto, half-bound in Russia[53]

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53. In bookbinding, russia originally meant calfskin tanned in willow bark, a process that produced a distinctive scent that later bookbinders sought to recreate. By the early twentieth century russia was made from "horsehides, calf, goat, and sheepskin" and its "pleasing odor [was] obtained by saturating with birch oil." John J. Pleger, *Bookbinding and Its Auxiliary Branches* (Chicago: The Inland Printer Company, 1914), 148.

("4to h-b Rus."). The final descriptive note in both records is "ba." In this context, it is likely that the books' spines have raised bands, but neither the Duff catalog nor the Rylands OPAC provides enough information to define the term.

The notation "bo." shows unequivocally in the record for *Luctus Christianorum ex passione* (1471), a book from the press of the esteemed early printer Nicholas Jenson. The slip describes this work as a small quarto bound in red morocco, with gilt leaves or letters and with ribbons ("sm. 4to r.m. g.l. a. ri. bo."). It is not clear what "bo." signifies. The usually prolix Dibdin devotes relatively little space to Jenson's *Luctus Christianorum* (1471), writing that it is "in red morocco, elaborately ornamented."[54] Thus, the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* will not clarify this cryptic note. The Rylands OPAC and the Duff catalog do not provide any additional information about this work.

A final abbreviation that has defied attempts at conjecture is the simple "a." This abbreviation can be seen in the record for the Jenson work above. It also appears in the record for Terentianus's *De litteris, syllabis et metris Horatii,* printed by Scinzenzeler in 1497. Both the Rylands and Grolier catalogs describe this work as a folio with gilt leaves, bound in blue morocco, with ribbons and, possibly, "bones" ("f. gl. blu. m. ri. bo."). But the descriptions end with the mysterious "a." Dibdin discusses this book in

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54. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana; or, a Descriptive Catalogue of the Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century, and of Many Valuable First Editions, in the Library of George John Earl Spencer, K.G. &c. &c. &c.,* Vol. 4 (London: W. Bulmer, 1815), 128.

Volume 3 of the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana,*[55] but his description does not illuminate the abbreviation's meaning.

Other Symbols and Abbreviations

The catalogers also used a few conventions that are easily recognized today but that may have had additional significance at the time. For example, an author's name in parentheses or brackets usually means to a modern cataloger that the book did not provide the author's name; instead, the cataloger obtained the author's name elsewhere, putting this information in brackets to show that it came from a source outside the book. While the Spencer catalogers may have intended this meaning, at least one author's name was placed in parentheses even though his name was included in the work's title: John Bourchier Berners's *Arthur of Brytayn: The History of the Moost Noble and Valiant Knight Arthur of Lytell Brytayne* includes the author's name within the title (the name actually appears on the title page as "Iohan bourghcher knyght lorde Barners"). Please see figure 4.12. for a photograph of this slip.

Parentheses were also frequently left blank, suggesting that the cataloger intended to return to these slips to add information. For example, the slip for Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville's *Proposition d'une me'sure de la teste* shows the author's surname, followed by "(d')." It seems that the cataloger did not find the author's first name in the book but wished to include this information and therefore left room to add it later; however, the information was never added.

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55. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana; or, a Descriptive Catalogue of the Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century, and of Many Valuable First Editions, in the Library of George John Earl Spencer, K.G. &c. &c. &c.,* Vol. 3 (London: W. Bulmer, 1814), 112.

Sometimes the cataloger did not leave enough space to complete an entry. The slip for Paulus Ernestus Jablonski's *Institutiones historiae Christionae antiquioris* (1754-56) has the writer's first and second names within parentheses, but the "s" in Ernestus is bisected by the close parenthesis. An additional slip exhibiting this problem is for Sebastian Jugendres's *Disquisitio in notas characteristicas librorum a typographiae incunabulo* (1470). Only by writing in cramped, small letters could the cataloger fit the author's first names ("M. Sebast. Jacobus") within the previously written parentheses.

The slips also include several inscrutable symbols, abbreviations, and numerical notations. For example, an entry for Muratori, a Modena, Italy librarian who lived from 1672-1750,[56] has a "+" over the center of Muratori's name. Above the name of Graevius, a German classical scholar and critic who lived from 1632 to 1703,[57] is a period or dot inside a circle.

Perhaps these symbols show that the scholars edited or collected the works cataloged under their names. Both the Muratori title, *Rerum Italicarum scriptores* (1723-51), and the Graevius title, *Thesaurus antiquitatum, et histoirarum, Sciliae, Sardiniae, et Corsicae ut et nonnullar adjacentium insular* (1723), are multiple-volume works that contain writings by others. To settle these questions and determine what distinguishes

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56. Johann Peter Kirsch, "Luigi Antonio Muratori," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 10 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1911), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04011c.htm.

57. "Johann Georg Graevius," in the *Encyclopedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information,* Vol. 12, (New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1910), 315.

the two symbols from each other, it would be essential to identify other authors or works that bear the Muratori and Graevius marks.[58]

Like modern librarians and catalogers, Ocheda used parentheses to show that he obtained certain information outside the title page or at least outside the book. For example, the third-to-last line of the Berners record, seen in figure 4.12., ends with empty open-and-closed parentheses. Ocheda most likely intended to add the book's printing date, as this key information is missing from the slip. In fact, the actual book did not give its printing date. The ESTC assigns the book a surmised printing date of 1560.[59] Duff gave a printing date of 1551, which he also placed in brackets, to signify that the information was found outside the title page. The Rylands OPAC uses the ESTC's conjectured date of circa 1560.

Another slip has "Brown," the author name, in parentheses. This slip is a cross-reference, not a main entry, and relates to a fifty-two part series entitled *Bibliotheca topographica Britannica* (1780-90). The work's title page does not list the author's name because *Bibliotheca topographica Britannica* was a series of publications, comprising articles written by several authors. Many other first names are in parentheses, even though these names appear on the relevant work's title page; the parentheses suggests that the information was presented in a way that differed from the title page. It is likely

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58. Both the Grolier and Rylands sheaf catalogs include these symbols.

59. English Short Title Catalogue, "Record for Arthur of Brytayn: The Hystory of the Moost Noble and Valyaunt Knyght Arthur of Lytell Brytayn. . .," http://estc.bl.uk/F/UUP5LKHX31RHIEQRBLVUFIQG69H498LY8DJPM7KMPVEUJLC94J-25693?func=full-set-set&set_number=031516&set_entry=000002&format=999 (accessed February 8, 2009).

that Ocheda placed these names in parentheses because he was repositioning the surname before the author's first name (as he alphabetized authors according to surname and not forename).

In addition to these symbols, a checkmark or "V." was written on many slips. While occasionally this mark seems to be a "V." (as in *vide* or "see") often it more closely resembles a checkmark. In both cases, whether the mark is a "V." or checkmark, it appears next to a subject or book cross-reference. Usually, the "V." was written to the immediate left of a book title or author name, when this information appears on its own, i.e., without any physical descriptive details. In addition, the "V." notes are often in Ocheda's handwriting, while the checkmark and subject notes are in Spencer's handwriting.

In contrast, the checkmarks appear below fully detailed book descriptions and next to subject headings.[60] This juxtaposition suggests that Spencer was double-checking that books were cross-referenced under subject headings. Spencer may have jotted subject headings on an already completed bibliographical slip; he thereby may have been instructing his librarian to create a separate subject cross-reference slip to lead a reader back to the book described in that bibliographic record. Then, after the librarian had composed the slip cross-referencing the book, Spencer or the librarian may have checked off the subject heading on the book slip. It seems more likely that Spencer himself checked off the subject headings, as the checkmark matches his scratchier, finer handwriting rather than Ocheda's thicker writing style.

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60. Figure 4.12. shows Spencer's checkmark next to his note "Arthur of Brytain."

Christie's, the auction house that handled the sale of the sheaf catalog to the Grolier Club, hypothesized that Spencer may have used these notes in compiling a classified catalog.[61] Spencer was so interested in mastering his collection that he spent the last years of his life working on a book-form classified catalog: the year before his death, Spencer wrote that he was "trying his hand at a classed catalogue."[62] This classed catalog is most likely Rylands accession number Eng MS 65, a four-volume catalog Spencer began but did not complete. Indeed, Spencer left most of the volumes blank. Many checkmarks in the sheaf catalog are juxtaposed against subject classifications that Spencer did not reach in his classed catalog; it is therefore unlikely that the checkmarks relate to the classed catalog he began towards the end of his life. The classed catalog is discussed further in Chapter Five.

Further support for the theory that Spencer was directing his notations to his librarian is that such notes appear in the Rylands sheaf catalog. For example, both the Grolier and Rylands slips for the work *A Complete Vindication of the Mallard of All-Souls College against the Injurious Suggestions of the Revd. Mr. Pointer* (1750) include the note "✓ All Soul's College." If Spencer were using the Grolier catalog to compile a classed catalog, his notes would most likely not appear in both sheaf catalogs. But if he were refining his sheaf catalog, it is probable that he would have reviewed both catalogs to ensure they each contained parallel cross-references.

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61. Christie's, Auction Catalog.

62. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* 444.

Several slips have small underlined numbers written in a superscript position. For example, the record for John Booker's *No Mercurius Aquaticus, but a Cable-Rope Double Twisted for John Tayler* (1644) has no bibliographical information other than author name, book title, year printed, accession number, and one cross-reference: "See Taylor $^{\underline{15}}$." "Taylor" has many items, and the first appears to be a detailed record for the John Booker title, but this record does not illuminate the meaning of "$^{\underline{15}}$." Perhaps the Booker work was an "independent"[63] bound together with other slim titles that related to John Taylor.

Unfortunately, the Rylands OPAC record for this work does not provide any answers to these questions. In fact, it seems that the Rylands might have its own questions about the Booker work, as the OPAC shows two entries for Booker's title: one has the Spencer accession number /10176 and the second has the Spencer accession number with a numerical suffix of 15, or /10176.15. Both have different Rylands bibliographical identification numbers, suggesting that there are two copies of the same title; otherwise, the records are identical.

Other slips contain similar numerical notations. The record for John Geree's *The Downfall of Anti-Christ or the Power of Preaching to Pull Down Popery* (1641) includes a cross-reference to "Hunt $^{\underline{62}}$." The Hunt slip, which describes James Hunt's *A Plaine and Perfect Touchstone for to Try the Bishops and All Their Clergy,* does not provide any clues to the meaning of "$^{\underline{62}}$." Again, this matter could be addressed by examining these

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63. An independent is a pamphlet published separately and later bound together into one physical volume. Roberts and Etherington, *Bookbinding and the Conservation of Books,* 296.

two titles, which, confusingly, have Rylands accession numbers /6432.61 and /6432.1 respectively.

A few of these slips contain the abbreviation "C.P.P.1" or "C.P.P.2." The record for (Earl of Dundonald) Archibald Cochrane's seemingly uncontroversial *Present State of the Manufacture of Salt Explained* includes the note "C.P.P.1." Robert Roe's response, *An Answer to a Pamphlet Published by the Earl of Dondonald* [sic] includes the note "C.P.P.2." Caleb D'Anver's *A Dissertation Upon Parties; in Several Letters . . .* has the notation "CPP.1." All three titles have the same accession number, 869. These abbreviations may denote the confrontational political journal, *The Craftsman* (C.P.P. = Craftsman Political Papers?), produced by Caleb D'Anvers (a pseudonym for Viscount Henry St. John Bolingbroke).

Some Answers and Questions for Future Research

Examining Spencer's sheaf catalogs inspires more questions than answers them. We can conclude that Ocheda prepared most of the General Catalogue slips found in the Grolier chest and that the latter catalog was begun as early as 1790. The Rylands catalog's creation date is more elusive.

Spencer involved himself intimately in the Grolier catalog's maintenance, apparently suggesting subject cross-references and ensuring such slips were prepared and filed. He most probably kept two catalogs because he had two significant libraries, but this conclusion remains conjectural.

The catalogs' respective locations can only be surmised. The Rylands catalog was found at the Althorp library in August 1892, moving to the John Rylands Memorial

Library when Enriqueta Rylands acquired Spencer's collection. The Grolier sheaf catalog was in the muniments room at Althorp before Quaritch bought and consigned it for sale at Christie's, which sold the catalog to the Grolier Club in 1995.

Several significant puzzles remain. Where was the Grolier catalog from 1790 (assuming the earliest possible creation date) to 1995? Where was the Rylands catalog before 1892, and when was it initiated? Who else, other than Ocheda and Spencer,[64] compiled slips for the catalogs? Who devised the sheaf catalog format that Spencer adopted? Additional research into Spencer family records and the second Earl Spencer's manuscript collections may help illuminate these mysteries.

Despite these mysteries, the sheaf catalogs conjure a clear picture of Spencer. He wasn't only an exceptional book collector; Spencer seemed to thoroughly enjoy organizing and managing his libraries. He firmly devoted himself to several cataloging endeavors so that he – and his friends – could extract knowledge from the vast literary repositories at Althorp and Spencer House. Even Dibdin, described erroneously as Spencer's librarian, was not nearly as interested in managing Spencer's collection as the preeminent collector himself was. These remarkable and unique sheaf catalogs uncover a little-known aspect of Spencer; known as a wealthy, acquisitive, and focused book collector, Spencer was a librarian in secret.

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64. Spencer hand-wrote several bibliographical slips, in addition to writing subject cross-references on existing slips.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRIVATE LIBRARY CATALOGS OF SPENCER AND OTHER EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BOOK COLLECTORS

Many Books, Many Catalogs

Spencer cataloged his libraries as zealously as he collected books. Along with his two sheaf catalogs, he owned at least six manuscript, book-form catalogs, as well as Dibdin's seven-volume, typeset *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*. Spencer himself wrote or contributed to most of the book-form catalogs as well as to the sheaf catalogs, demonstrating he was intellectually – and not solely materialistically – interested in books.

Like Spencer, many nineteenth-century bibliophiles were interested in accessing the information stored in their libraries. Many of Spencer's contemporaries kept written, albeit simpler, catalogs. Cataloging their books helped Spencer and his fellow collectors access their libraries' textual wealth; this goal was not usually associated with bibliomania, a pursuit that some considered materialistic and crass. While few, if any, collectors had Spencer's number and variety of catalogs, reviewing other collectors' catalogs offers helpful insight into Spencer's cataloging methods. Comparing other nineteenth-century private library catalogs to Spencer's sheaf catalogs also demonstrates that he was a pioneer in library cataloging technology and theory.

This chapter will examine six of the seven Spencer book-form catalogs held by the Rylands.[1] The catalogs appear below in the order in which they are cataloged in *Handlist of the Collection of English Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library* (the *Handlist*).[2] This chapter ends by considering three roughly contemporaneous book-form catalogs. Now in the Grolier Club's collection, the catalogs were created by or for three nineteenth-century British book collectors.

Spencer's Other Catalogs

In addition to an already impressive library, Spencer inherited at least one library catalog. And just as he did with his collection, Spencer refined and expanded his library's catalogs, generating sub-catalogs; a classified catalog; and, of course, his remarkable sheaf catalogs. This section will first discuss Spencer's Numerical Index, which is not cataloged in the *Handlist,* followed by Spencer's other book-form catalogs.

Numerical Index

This catalog[3] is the key to Spencer's advanced sheaf catalog and thus to his entire library. It was so essential to the Spencer collection that the Rylands did not catalog it; the Numerical Index was a library management tool. Today, the Rylands considers the Index as part of the institution's archives, and the Index may not even be cataloged at all.

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1. This thesis does not examine the catalog Spencer prepared of his books that were printed by the revered early printer, Aldus Manutius and his successors at the Aldine Press. A penciled annotation inside the front cover states "671 Aldines in this book."

2. Moses Tyson, *Hand-List of the Collection of English Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1929).

3. Numerical Index, Item E.5.i. or E.6.i [sic], John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

An examination of Spencer's sheaf catalogs would be incomplete without the Numerical Index, which appears thanks to a sharp-minded Rylands archivist.

The Numerical Index was the key to Spencer's library. A reader could search the sheaf catalog (or one of the book-form catalogs), note the accession numbers of the desired titles, consult the Numerical Index to obtain book locations, and retrieve the books. Separating book locations from bibliographic information might have allowed Spencer's librarians greater freedom in managing the libraries. They could keep the bibliographical catalogs – the sheaf catalogs and others described in this chapter – clear of edits needed to revise location changes.[4]

Just as significant was the Numerical Index's other purpose: recording and assigning accession numbers. Even Rylands staff used Spencer's Numerical Index to record works that related to Spencer's collection but that were not necessarily part of it; these items include several of the Spencer manuscript catalogs included in this chapter and a catalog of the Duke of Marlborough's incunable collection.

The Numerical Index's pages are lined, with each line numbered by hand in the far left margin. The numbering begins with one and ends with 26000, all written by the same hand. A thin red margin to the right of the numbers divides each page vertically. In the right-hand column are the books' locations in Spencer's libraries. Most of this space is blank; Spencer used a system of abbreviations and numbers so that a book's location could be written economically.

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4. As noted in the descriptions of contemporaneous book-form catalogs that follow, other book collectors often presented location and bibliographic information together in one catalog.

On the index's flyleaf (the verso of the marbled frontpage) is a handwritten chart, not in Spencer's handwriting, defining the abbreviations used in the location codes. This chart decodes the location system and allows the user to determine where a particular item is. For example, "S." written next to an accession number means the item was at Spencer House. Althorp did not have its own short form but was implied in other abbreviations and codes; examples appear below. According to the table, Spencer also kept books at a family estate in Wimbledon[5] and at yet another family estate, in Ryde, a town on the Isle of Wight.

Additional abbreviations helped the reader narrow down where an item was at Spencer House and Althorp. "S.Parl." signified the Parliamentary Room at Spencer's London residence, while "P.L." was the Permanent Library in London. Spencer's index also allowed one to note if an item in the Spencer House library were being bound ("B." next to the title). "S.C."[6] next to an accession number means "Caxton Case al De [or Do]," "Ald." means "Aldine cases al De [or Do]," and so on. The abbreviation "De" or "Do" likely signifies "ditto."[7] The abbreviation appears directly below the words "Spencer House" and thus signifies that the Aldine cases and Caxton case were at Spencer House. For a significant period, Spencer kept his Caxtons and Aldines in London, and therefore these cases would be located at Spencer House.

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5. At the time, the Spencer family owned the village of Wimbledon.

6. For "Spencer House Caxtons"?

7. "Ditto," meaning "the same as before," is derived from the Italian past participle of dire, or detto. Walter William Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1893), 174. Thus, when abbreviated, the term may have been rendered as "do" or "de."

Althorp's library was far more extensive, as Dibdin elaborately related in the

Aedes Althorpianae. For books at Althorp, a shelf location corresponding to the location

chart was written alongside the accession number. Continuing his active involvement in

organizing and managing his library, Spencer himself almost certainly jotted this table, as

it appears to be written in his handwriting.

> No. 1 to 36 [illeg.] - - Long Library, Window Side to NW End
> 37 to 41 inclusive - - Raphael Room, Window Side
> 42 to 49 inclusive - - Billiard Room, Window Side
> 50 to 68 inclusive - - Marlborough Room, all [round?]
> 69 to 79 inclusive - - Billiard Room, Fireplace Side
> 80 to 96 inclusive - - Raphael Room, Fire Place Side & Both Ends
> 97 to 122 inclusive - - Long Library, Fire Place Side
> 123 to 172 _____ - - Picture Gallery, all round
> 173 to 196 inclusive - - Gothick Room, all round
> 197 to 220 inclusive - - D° [ditto?] Gallery, all round
> 221 to 2— inclusive - - Corridor opposite the Window

The next page instructs readers seeking Bible-related texts to "first check Class I

of the Class[ed] Catalogue." A synopsis of Class I was pasted below this instruction.[8]

The Index entries begin on the following page.

The Numerical Index contains entries for accession numbers 1 through 22452.

Spencer's descendants apparently continued using the index to record new acquisitions,

as in February 1864 Index entries ended with 22395.[9] The Index was so useful that

Enriqueta Rylands's librarians used it to organize and process the Spencer collection.

Accession numbers from 22453 to 23015 have entries, in different handwriting than the

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8. The Classed Catalogue is George John Spencer, *Class Catalogue of Books at Althorp,* Eng MS 65, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester (1792). It receives greater attention below.

9. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries.*

previous entries and in pencil; Spencer-era entries were all written in ink. In addition,

accession numbers 22453 to 23015 have Rylands locations rather than Spencer locations.

Rylands staff also noted other information about certain titles, such as "Rejected" or

"Given to Owens College."[10]

The only handwriting currently identifiable in the Numerical Index belongs to

Spencer. Ocheda's hand does not appear. Future efforts to identify handwriting in

Spencer's catalogs should include assessing the handwriting in the Numerical Index.

Catalog of the Early Printed Books in the Library of Lord Spencer, Arranged under Printers

Spencer's antiquarian book collection was rich enough to merit a catalog focusing

solely on early incunables, books printed during the earliest years of mechanical printing.

Catalog of the Early Printed Books in the Library of Lord Spencer, Arranged under

Printers[11] lists Spencer's books that were printed between the 1450s and early 1470s.

This catalog is a single volume comprising 168 folio-sized leaves, 85 of which are

blank. It is bound in vivid and lustrous green morocco, with gilt rulings stamped along

the edges and an "S" gilt-stamped on the front cover. The catalog measures 32.5

centimeters high and 19 centimeters wide (12.75 inches and 7.5 inches, respectively).

Spencer wrote the catalog's entries.

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10. The books given to Owens College might very likely have returned to the Rylands. Founded in 1851, Owens College became the Victoria University of Manchester in 1880; the University of Manchester was formed when Victoria University merged with another Manchester university, UMIST.

11. *Catalogue of Early Incunables in the Bibliotheca Spenceriana, Arranged under Printers,* Eng MS 64, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

As the title implies, works are organized by printer surname. The first several pages have been trimmed to create tabbed pages, with letters distributed alphabetically along the tabs, so that one can open the book immediately to a desired letter. Works having an unknown printer name appear under their respective printing locations. The catalog's first pages include an index listing the printers alphabetically and functioning as a table of contents.

The pages following the index are hand-numbered. The printers and their works appear in roughly chronological order, beginning with Johannes Fust and Peter ("Petrus" as Spencer wrote) Schoeffer. If the catalog lists two or more works by a printer, the titles also appear chronologically under the printer name. For example, Fust and Schoeffer's "Mainz Psalter" or *Psalterium Latinum* is the first book listed, with the earliest printing date to appear in this catalog – 1457. The last book is *Ciceronius Orationes*, a folio printed by Adam de Ambergau in 1472, the latest date included.

Each entry lists book title, size, and, if known, printing date. If the printing location is known, the location appears next to the printer's name, in the heading. As noted above, where the printer's name is unknown, the work appears under the printer's location. For example, one entry without a printer name reads "Romae, sine Nomine Typographi" or "in Rome, without printer's name."

This catalog shows that Spencer valued cross-references, even in a relatively small and limited catalog. For example, the entry for William Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, a folio Caxton printed circa 1473,[12] includes the following note: "See

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12. In his catalog, Spencer assigned the work an erroneous printing date of 1471.

Dibdin's Edition of Ames's Typographical Antiq. p. 16." On page 16 of *Ames's Typographical Antiquities*, Dibdin began a lengthy series of excerpts from Caxton's *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* and described the few known copies.[13] Dibdin also wrote that Spencer owned an imperfect copy of the Caxton but that a "Mr Austin" owned a superior copy. Perhaps Spencer eventually obtained the more complete copy that Henry Edmund Austen ("Mr. Austin"?) owned; the Rylands's *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* bears both Austen's bookplate and Spencer accession number 10863.

Class Catalogue of the Books at Althorp

Comprising four volumes, this catalog[14] is the largest of Spencer's book catalogs. The volumes are half-bound in red morocco, with marbled paper-covered boards; an oval leather Bibliotheca Spenceriana book label was pasted inside each front cover. Each volume has 188 unlined leaves, creating 376 pages. A paper slip pasted on each cover gives the volume's title. Pages are hand-numbered on the outer, top corner of each page. Each volume measures 32 centimeters high and 20 centimeters wide (12.5 inches and 8 inches, respectively).

In creating this catalog, Spencer[15] apparently sought to fulfill a much broader purpose than that of his other book-form catalogs. He followed a classification scheme that organized subjects systematically, a practice popularized by Conrad Gessner and his fellow sixteenth-century bibliographers. Such a catalog could have allowed Spencer to

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13. Ames, *Typographical Antiquities*.

14. Spencer, *Class Catalogue of Books at Althorp*.

15. Almost all the handwriting in this catalog is Spencer's.

emphasize his books' content, diminishing the priority bibliophiles often attached to rarity and monetary value.

Spencer wrote his classification scheme on the first few pages of Volume 1. The system organized his collection into seven classes, with each class divided into divisions and many divisions further divided into sections. Following the classification scheme is the table of contents for all four volumes.

The classification scheme begins with theology, which Spencer split in two divisions: "Bibles and Parts of the Bible" and "Writers on Divinity." These two divisions consume two hundred pages of Spencer's catalog – over two-thirds of Volume 1. His book collection also seemed to begin with theology, as Bibles, psalters, and other theological works tend to have the lowest accession numbers. Assigning low numbers to these works suggests that Spencer acquired these books first (even if he may have replaced one or more with more desirable copies) or that he valued them so significantly that he wished to catalog them first. The latter scenario is more probable, as Spencer started his book collecting with an already well-established library inherited from his father, augmented later by the Reviczky purchase.

The six remaining classes in Spencer's four-volume catalog are jurisprudence and politics, arts and sciences, literary history, polygraphy, *Belles Lettres,* and history. Polygraphy includes miscellaneous writers and encyclopaedias, while *Belle Lettres* includes grammars, dictionaries, and almost two hundred pages of entries regarding poets.

A book's accession number appears, usually in parentheses, after each entry. Spencer wrote most entries on the versos and kept almost all the rectos blank; perhaps he wished to reserve space for future accessions.

Spencer arranged book entries alphabetically by author or title. Books with an unknown author, such as the first entry, *Apocalypsis*, appear under their titles; books by "corporate authors" in modern cataloging terms (such as "Articles agreed on by the Bishops &c.") also appear under their titles.

Entries in this catalog contain more information than entries in Spencer's catalog of early printed books. In fact, his four-volume catalog contains almost as many facts, such as accession numbers and physical details regarding binding, as his sheaf catalog. Perhaps he used the sheaf catalog to compose the four-volume classed catalog? It is unlikely that the reverse occurred – that Ocheda prepared slips using Spencer's classed catalog – as many entries in the Grolier sheaf catalog contain misspellings or have empty parentheses indicating missing information such as an author's first name or a book's printing location. The classed catalog does not have such parentheses, omissions, or mistakes.

The sheaf catalog contains information regarding physical description that Spencer declined to include in his four-volume catalog. The latter catalog does intimate that additional information exists, with "&c" or "et cetera" substituting for some of the abbreviations given in the sheaf slips. For example, the first book entry, which appears under Division 1, Bibles and Parts of the Bible (which in turn is under Class I, Theology), is for a block-book version of the Book of the Apocalypse. According to the *Class*

Catalog, this work is a folio, executed possibly during the years 1440 to 1450 by Laurens Coster, but the book does not state when it was made ("s.a." for *sine anno*). Following s.a. is "&c" and the accession number. Given the usual pattern in Spencer's bibliographic records, the "&c" was most likely the book's binding material, color, and related details.

It is likely that this is the classed catalog that Spencer began the year before he died. Near the end of his life, Spencer wrote to Dibdin that he was "trying my hand at a Classed Catalogue."[16] When Edwards visited Althorp in 1864, he looked through the *Class Catalogue* and told his readers, "[t]here is also the beginning, but only the beginning, of a Classed Catalogue, compiled by the second Earl himself, but begun too late in life to be carried far."[17]

The *Class Catalogue* is incomplete, a fact that supports the theory that Spencer began this catalog shortly before his death. Volume 1, which includes theology, has many blank pages even though Spencer had hundreds of Bibles; the classed catalog lists only 55 Bibles. The index to Dibdin's *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* lists over 230 editions of the Bible (excluding works that reproduced portions of the Bible). The catalog does not include notable Spencer purchases, such as the Valdarfer Boccaccio, which Spencer bought in 1819. In fact, while the Rylands sheaf catalog has 35 entries for the *Decamerone,* the classed catalog lists only 8.

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16. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors,* 312.

17. Edwards, *Libraries and Founders of Libraries,* 428. Edwards calls the catalog a "Classed Catalogue."

There are further signs that this catalog is the classed catalog Spencer was

working on but never finished. Volume 3, which covers Class VI (*Belle Lettres*) and

Class VII (history), should be packed with entries. However, this volume has a

significant amount of blank pages. Volume 4, which continues and completes the history

classification, contains only one entry. Indeed, none of the titles included in the classed

catalog appear to have an accession number over 8200, suggesting that (1) Spencer used

his Numerical Index to initiate the classed catalog, consulting the sheaf catalog for

bibliographic content and (2) he stopped well before he cataloged half his collection.

Increasing the confusion is the title Spencer wrote on the first leaf of Volume 1:

"Catalogue
of Books at Althorp.
1792"

Perhaps Spencer was only cataloging books that were in his collection as of 1792; this

would have included mainly the collection he inherited plus the Reviczky purchase and

may at least partially explain the catalog's brevity.

Catalogue of the Library at Althorp

This catalog[18] represents the library that Spencer inherited from his father. The

book is a single volume of ninety-five leaves, bound in green-stained vellum over boards;

an oval leather Bibliotheca Spenceriana book label was pasted inside the front cover.

The John Rylands Memorial Library device – a circle with the letters R and J entwined –

was stamped in gold on the front cover. The title page bears the following inscription,

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18. *Catalogue of the Althorp Library of Viscount Spencer,* Eng MS 67, John Rylands
Library, University of Manchester (1761).

written in large copperplate: "A CATALOGUE. of the LIBRARY of the Right Honourable, Lord Viscount SPENCER. at ALTHORP. 1761."[19] Ink from this inscription has burned onto the facing page. The catalog measures 37 centimeters high and 29 centimeters wide (14.5 inches and 11.5 inches, respectively).

The person who produced this catalog applied an organizational scheme that differs strongly from the approaches used in the other Spencer catalogs. Instead of organizing the books by subject, printer, or printing location, the 1761 catalog divides the books by size into three groups: folios, quartos, and octavos and smaller books. Each of these three groups is divided into three subgroups: Greek and Latin, English, and French and Italian; quartos have four subgroups, with French and Italian books each having their own subgroup.

As Chapter Two describes, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was common practice to arrange books by size. However, the books were usually first divided into rough subject classifications such as history, philosophy, and theology.[20] The 1761 catalog reversed this approach and organized the books first by size, then by subject.

Each page in this catalog is divided into four columns. The first two are very narrow and are headed "Division" and "Shelf/Part of Do."[21] The second column gives an item's shelfmark, which indicates the item's location. The third is very wide, almost the

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19. John Spencer, George John's father, became Viscount Spencer of Althorp in 1761; he was named Earl Spencer in 1765. Doyle, *The Official Baronage of England,* 378.

20. Carpenter, "Catalogs and Cataloging," 107-17.

21. The latter phrase meant "part of same," i.e., "part of that shelf."

entire width of the page and holds the author and title of each work. Printing locations appear in this third section but were written flush against the fourth column. The fourth and final column is very narrow and lists the work's date.

Each subgroup is organized alphabetically by author or, if no author is given, by title. The alphabet is distributed within each subgroup with, in one case for example, one page for each letter starting with Æ through O, one page for PQ, two pages for S, one for VU, and one for XYZ.[22] According to the catalog, no titles included in the 1761 collection begin with T.

This catalog evokes a relatively modest collection, contrasting with the libraries that Spencer would eventually command at Althorp and Spencer House. The 1761 catalog also provides historical details that enrich our understanding of both Spencer and to library cataloging. The books are organized first by size and then by language, a scheme too simple for Spencer's greatly expanded libraries but appropriate for the smaller 1761 collection. It even has cross-references; for example, a work by Aristotle, *De generatione animalium,* includes the note "(vide Olympiodorum.)." Hinting at the high standards Spencer would apply, the catalog followed a basic but systematic approach that very probably informed Spencer's own library management ideas.

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22. The catalog followed the Latin alphabet and therefore omits J and W.

Catalog of Fifteenth Century-Printed Books

The Rylands describes this catalog[23] as "pocket-sized"[24] and indeed it is quite

small: 17.5 centimeters high and 11 centimeters wide (7 inches and 4.33 inches,

respectively). The book has ninety leaves and is bound in green morocco with red calf

doublures.[25] The front and back covers and the doublures are gold-tooled. An oval

leather "Bibliotheca Spenceriana" book label was placed on the inside front cover.

The unknown writer used a precise and elegant copperplate script. This hand may

also appear in the sheaf catalogs. Others may have contributed to the catalog, as some

entries (namely regarding books printed by William Caxton) were written in black letter

or gothic script. Spencer may also have scrawled a few anotations throughout the book.

This catalog organizes works by subject classification: (1) "Libri Sacri &

Theologici" (with the subgroup "Sancti Patres"), (2) "Catalogus Scriptorum

Antiquorum," (3) "Libri Lexicographici et Grammatici," (4) "Libri Miscellanei," and (5)

"Libri In Anglia Impressi." Unlike Spencer's other book-form catalogs, this pocket

version does not have a table of contents. Instead, the subject headings appear within the

catalog, at the beginning of each of the five sections.

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23. *Catalogue of Fifteenth-Century Printed Books in the Spencer Library,* Eng MS 72, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

24. John Rylands Library, ELGAR: Electronic Gateway to Archives at Rylands: Record for Catalogs of the Spencer Library.

25. A doublure is an ornamental lining, usually taking the place of pastedown and flyleaf, and often made of leather or watered silk. Roberts and Etherington, *Bookbinding and the Conservation of Books,* 296.

Books were entered alphabetically under the author's name; this information was written on the recto of each leaf, with the versos often used for amendments. Most entries occupy two lines: the work's author (or the title if author is unknown) appears on the first line; the second line contains the title (if the author is known), the date and place of printing if known,[26] size, and, occasionally, printer name. If the language in which the book was written is not apparent from the title, the entry may include this information. For example, the entry for one of Spencer's Bibles reads: "Biblia Pauperum/s.a. s.l. Fol. Germ. Pfister" for a folio-sized "Biblia Pauperum"[27] in German, printed by (Albrecht) Pfister, which lacks the printing year and location.

Although the book's small size limits the number of entries per page, Spencer and at least one another writer expanded some listings onto the facing page (i.e., the verso of the previous page). Ocheda's handwriting does not appear in this book. At least one writer sketched a sometimes elaborate manicule,[28] pointing to the facing page, where the additional items were written. For example, the record for Augustine, in the Sancti Patres section, lists four titles, all but one with multiple editions. *De civitate Dei* has three editions, after which a manicule was drawn, pointing directly opposite to the record for another edition, a folio printed by Vindelin (or Wendelin) de Spira in Venice in 1470 ("1470 Venet. Fol. Vind. de Spira").

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26. If date is unknown, the entry states s.a.; if place is unknown, s.l.

27. Meaning "Bible of the poor," a Biblia Pauperum is usually brief and uses illustrations (printed from woodcuts) and some text to relay Biblical passages.

28. A manicule is a hand pointing a finger, used to emphasize text or to draw a reader's attention to such text. William H. Sherman, "Toward a History of the Manicule," *Lives and Letters,* April 2005.

Occasionally, the manicule appears in the inner margin of a facing page, pointing to a new addition squeezed between records entered on the opposite page. For example, in the middle of the page following the de Spira record, another Augustine title was written between other entries; opposite this addition is a manicule pointing to it. The record notes Augustine's work *De verâ cognitione* (most likely *De vere vite cognicione libellus*), a quarto printed by Johannes Fust.[29]

The entry for *De verâ cognitione* includes an undeciphered abbreviation. The location, Paris, was written after the abbreviation "Char."[30] Perhaps "Char." signifies that the information following the abbreviation is a guess. It is not clear what "char." abbreviates or and even what language it is in. The term could be Latin, as the catalog uses Latin terminology (i.e., *s.a.*, *cum*); it could also be English, as the catalog includes information in English (i.e., "see Catullus &c"). This study did not encounter "char." in any other Spencer catalog. Other inscrutable marks include "O" and "X," which appear on versos only.

The book was calligraphed precisely and elegantly, by at least two people. The book titles for the author Cicero, the classical Roman philosopher, were written in black letter script, though the bibliographical information is in copperplate script. Spencer may have scribbled a few lines, though the writing is almost illegible and occurs in brief spurts, thereby complicating efforts to assess the handwriting. For example, under the

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29. De Spira may have co-printed this book with Schoeffer; the entry states "Fust cum [illegible]), with the printing year and location unknown.

30. The full entry states "Augustin De Verâ Cognitione/s.a. s.l. 4to. Char. paris. Fust. cum [illegible]. "Char." also appears before some printer names, as in: "Char Zell" and "Char Mentellin."

author Hesiodus, a Greek poet who flourished circa 900 B.C., a writer scrawled another title but did not provide the printer or year. These notes also lack the manicule, which otherwise appears predictably for entries added after the pages were filled.

While this catalog omits Spencer's accession numbers, it does include at least two cross-references. For example, the record for Propertius, a classical Roman poet, instructs the reader to consult another Roman poet, Catullus, and others ("&c").

Of all Spencer's catalogs, *Catalog of Fifteenth Century-Printed Books* seems the likeliest to travel on book-buying ventures. It is compact – more compact than Spencer's other catalogs and infinitely more portable than his sheaf catalog. Spencer could put the catalog in a large pocket and have enough information at hand to determine if he already owned a particular incunable. Of course, the catalog does not include his entire collection, but it does address (1) the area of his collection that Spencer was especially intent on expanding and perfecting and (2) the type of books he would encounter on a trip to Europe.

Catalogue of Books at Althorp, Printed in the XV Century but Not Described in Bibliotheca Spenceriana

This one-volume catalog[31] bears the ex-libris (an ownership symbol) of John Poyntz Spencer, the fifth Earl Spencer, who reluctantly sold the Althorp Library to Enriqueta Rylands.[32] The fifth Earl Spencer's ex-libris, a vellum circle with the Spencer

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31. *Catalogue of Fifteenth-Century Books Not Listed in Dibdin's Bibliotheca Spenceriana,* Eng MS 74, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

32. The catalog may have been compiled in preparation for the 1892 sale of the Spencer Library. John Rylands Library, ELGAR: Electronic Gateway to Archives at Rylands: Record for Catalogs of the Spencer Library.

device and the words "Earl Spencer · John Poyntz Spencer" printed in gold around the circumference, appears on the recto of the first leaf. The catalog measures 23 centimeters high and 19 centimeters wide (9 inches and 7.5 inches, respectively). It was half-bound in calf, with the boards covered in cloth, and has twenty-four leaves, four of which are unlined. The last eight leaves are blank.

Bibliographic entries begin on page five (i.e., the third leaf), with books listed most often by author and otherwise by title. Each entry typically has author and/or title, printer location, printing year, size, Spencer accession number, and shelf location.[33] As the catalog's title suggests, it records Spencer incunable (totaling 207) that were not included in Dibdin's *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*.

Three small loose leaves[34] were folded inside the catalog. Printer locations with book titles and corresponding accession numbers were written in ink on one side of each leaf. One example appears below:

"STRASBURGH,
      Mentelin. Aquinas 17886
          "   Bellovacencis . . 1473 . . . . 16699"[35]

This list is puzzling. The catalog does not organize books by printer location; why would these notes do so? Neither title in the above example is included in the catalog, though both items were in Spencer's collection when Mrs. Rylands bought it.

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33. Perhaps the Numerical Index was not revised when the Spencer House library was consolidated at Althorp; it may therefore have been helpful to note the new locations in this later catalog.

34. Each leaf is 21 centimeters high and 14 centimeters wide (8.25 inches and 5.5 inches, respectively).

35. The Bellovacencis entry was crossed through.

Both books are cataloged at the Rylands and have Rylands shelfmarks that incorporate their Spencer accession numbers: Bellovacencis's *Speculum historiale,* has shelfmark /16699, and Acquinas's *Summa theologia (secunda pars),* has shelfmark /17886. Perhaps the list names works that (1) were not included in the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* and (2) were mistakenly omitted from the fifth Earl Spencer's catalog.

This catalog lacks the helpful details and comprehensive approach typical of the second Earl Spencer; it is likely that Spencer would have added more information about each entry. One example regards a book by the Renaissance historian Werner Rolevinck. The entry for this book reads "Fasciculus Temporum. Ispalem/Bart Segma atque Alfon de Portu. 1480. Fol. 7563. E235."[36] The Rylands holds five editions of *Fasciculus temporum* that once belonged to Spencer; one of them was attributed to the Seville-based printers Bartolomé Segura and Alfonso del Puerto, with a hypothesized printing date of 1480. However, this edition bears a different accession number, 23010, suggesting that Spencer may have acquired this copy after he added accession number 7563.

This entry also has an asterisk to the left of the title, leading the reader to a note at the page bottom: "This is the first Book printed in Spain." This note explains a major difference between the second Earl Spencer's catalogs and the *Catalogue of Books . . . Not Described in Bibliotheca Spenceriana.* Spencer was not interested in establishing the financial value of his library, and therefore he included many more details than would be

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36. The significance of "E235" is unclear. It may indicate the item's location, though the Numerical Index does not explain what "E" could mean.

needed for such an appraisal – for example, author, binding, chapter titles, and printing location. This catalog, on the contrary, presents information in telegraph-format, mentioning only the information that would identify a book and help establish the book's value, namely the title, printer name, printer year, and Spencer accession number (and possibly the item's location at Althorp).

Contemporaneous Catalogs

The Grolier Club possesses several catalogs that belonged to English book collectors of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Reviewing these catalogs provides helpful context for the Spencer sheaf catalogs and further emphasizes that his catalogs were pioneering and unique. Spencer was both a man of his time, echoing the growing interest in cataloging private book collections, and also a man ahead of his peers. Even the catalog of Bertram Ashburnham, a collector who shared Spencer's appetite and zeal for antiquarian books, seems inadequate and almost useless compared to the remarkable sheaf catalogs.

Earl of Galloway

The catalog prepared for the Galloway library was probably started in 1797 by John Stewart, the seventh Earl of Galloway.[37] Very little is known about Galloway's library, other than the information supplied by his catalog.

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37. Grolier Club, "The Grolier Club Library Online Catalogue: Record for the Catalog of the Earl of Galloway's Library at Galloway House," http://zippo.vtls.com/cgi-bin/grolier/chameleon?sessionid=2009020115344712815&skin=portal&lng=en (accessed February 1, 2009).

Galloway was born in Scotland in 1736 and died in 1806.[38] Through his daughter

Susan, he was connected to Spencer: in 1791, Susan married George Spencer Churchill,

the fifth Duke of Marlborough.[39] Chapter Three of this thesis recounts the frequently told

story of the Duke of Marlborough, then titled the Marquis of Blandford, outbidding the

second Earl Spencer for the Valdarfer Boccaccio in 1812. The Duke of Marlborough

parted with his books long before the Galloways and Spencers sold their respective

libraries; because of his extravagant spending, in 1819 Marlborough was forced to sell his

library – including the famed Valdarfer Boccaccio – which he sold to Spencer for far less

than the 1812 purchase price.

Galloway's library was unlikely to hold any poetry by Robert Burns, the eminent

Scottish poet. Burns satirized Galloway regularly, writing several poems with titles such

as "Against the Earl of Galloway" and "On the Author Being Threatened with Vengeance

[from the Earl of Galloway]."[40]

The eighth and ninth Earls added to the catalog, stretching this catalog's active

life from 1797 to 1837, long after the seventh Earl's death in 1806. Thus, it is likely that

both the Galloway and Grolier sheaf catalog were being actively used and maintained

during the same period.

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38. P. H. MacKerlie, *History of the Lands and Their Owners in Galloway; with Historical Sketches of the District,* Vol. 2 (Paisley [Scotland]: A. Gardner, 1906).

39. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors,* 326.

40. A representative excerpt reads "No Stewart art thou Galloway:/the Stewarts all were brave." Robert Burns, *The Poetry of Robert Burns,* ed. William Ernest Henley and Thomas F. Henderson, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T.C. and E.C. Jack, 1896), 252.

Measuring 33 centimeters high (13 inches), the catalog has 81 leaves. Almost all entries were handwritten neatly by the same person, probably in 1797. Some entries and additional information were added later, such as notations regarding an item's location (e.g., "Missing, March 16th, 1837").

The Galloway ledger lacks the polish and elegant materials usually used in private library catalogs. It was bound in contemporary reverse calf (natural-color suede), with a crude blind-stamped border on the cover. The word "Catalogue" was written in ink on the front cover. Figure 5.17. shows the catalog's front cover.
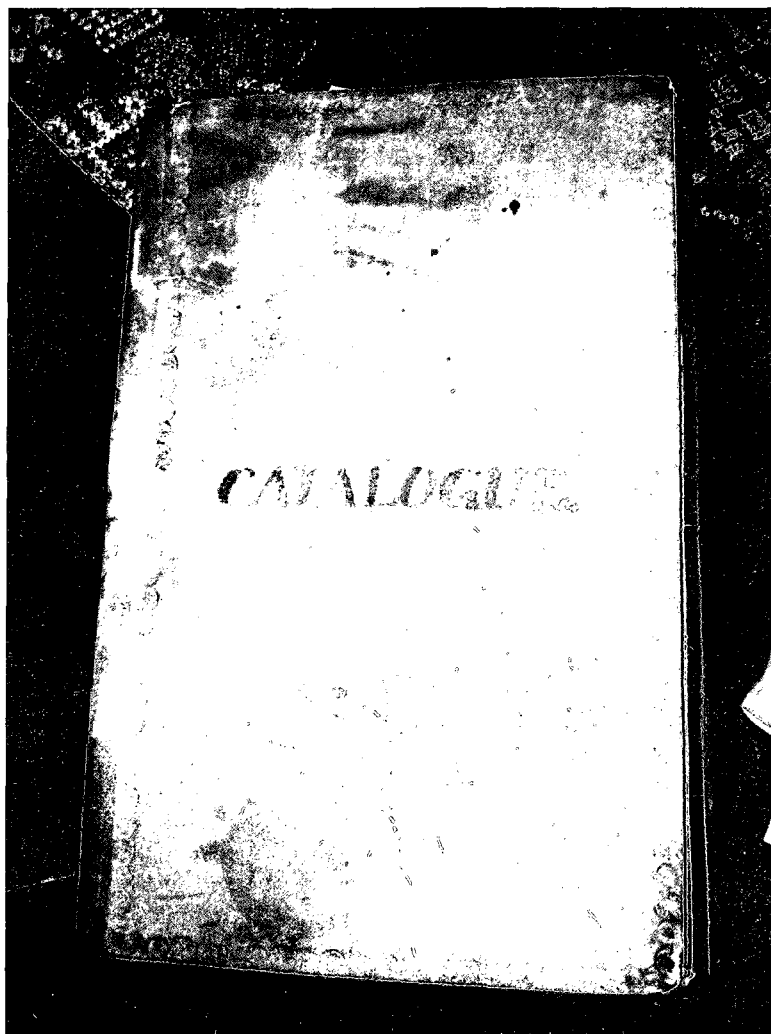
Figure 5.17. Cover view, Earl of Galloway catalog. Photograph by the author.

The Galloway catalog most likely served as an estate inventory at some point, as it has witness signatures. However, the catalog still demonstrates how the Earl and at least two of his descendants organized the collection. The catalog is in a single ledger with each page divided into five columns for each of the following: (1) a type of letter-based identification system that probably signifies location; (2) the title; (3) number, which most likely is an accession number; (4) place printed, and (5) date printed.

Occasionally, a work's size or number of volumes appears in the title column. Figure

5.18. is a photograph of page seventeen of the catalog; this page includes books classified
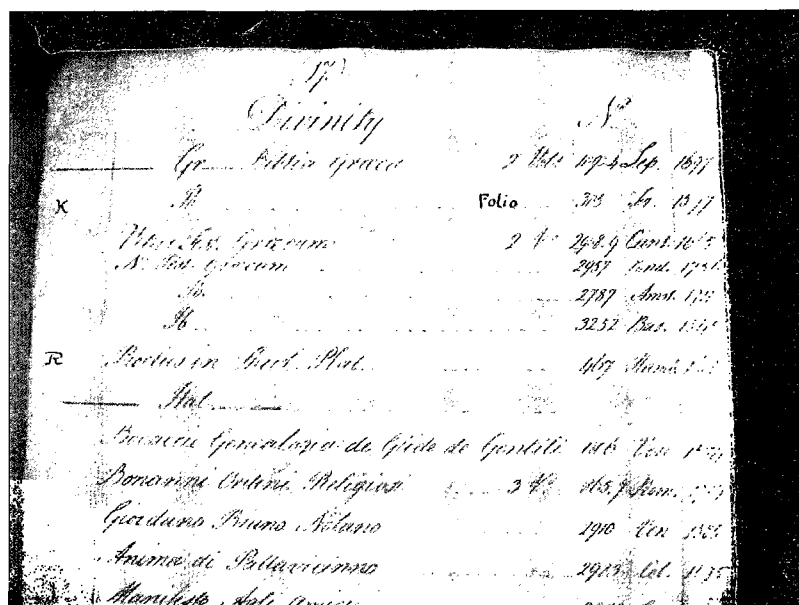
under "Divinity."

Figure 5.18. Galloway catalog, page 17. Photograph by the author.

Entries were organized by subject classification, such as antiquities, architecture,

biography, and, as in figure 5.18., divinity. The subject classifications were arranged

alphabetically. Works were entered under title, author, or subject, with no apparent

pattern or rule governing the arrangement.

The Galloway classification approach demonstrates that, like Spencer, other

private collectors were organizing their catalogs by subject. Of course, the main

difference is that Spencer could organize his collection both by title and subject matter, and he could theoretically rearrange entries indefinitely.[41]

William Elliot

The William Elliot library catalog was prepared circa 1818, the year Ocheda retired as Spencer's librarian. Very little is known about Elliot; the Grolier Club OPAC provides only an approximate date for Elliot's life and his catalog's creation: circa 1818 for both.[42]

Measuring 39 centimeters high (15.3 inches), Elliot's catalog was bound in contemporary full calf and has 405 leaves. A photograph of the cover view of this catalog appears as figure 5.19.

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41. Another difference is that Galloway, unlike Spencer, numbered each volume rather than each work.

42. Grolier Club, "The Grolier Club Library Online Catalogue: Record for the Catalog of the Library of William Elliot," http://zippo.vtls.com/cgi-bin/grolier/chameleon?host=zippo.vtls.com 6403 DEFAULT&search=KEYWORD&function=CARDSCR&SourceScreen=NEXTPAGE&sessioni d=20090201163003315254&skin=portal&conf=./chameleon.conf&lng=en&itemu1=1035&u1=10 35&t1=william elliot c(TRUNCATED) (Accessed February 1, 2009).

Figure 5.19. Cover view, William Elliot catalog. Photograph by the author.

Entries were written in ink by at least two different hands. The latest entry was dated 1818, placing the Elliot catalog firmly in the historical period of the Grolier sheaf catalog.

The Elliot catalog, too, is a ledger, with four columns on each page: (1) "notes," (2) shelf location, (3) title, and (4) acquisition number. The fourth column occasionally is blank. Works were entered into this catalog alphabetically by author or title; however, it is not clear why the title was preferred in some cases and the author in others. When given, shelf locations were written in pencil, most likely to allow this information to be

changed easily. Large sections of the pages are left blank, perhaps to allow for

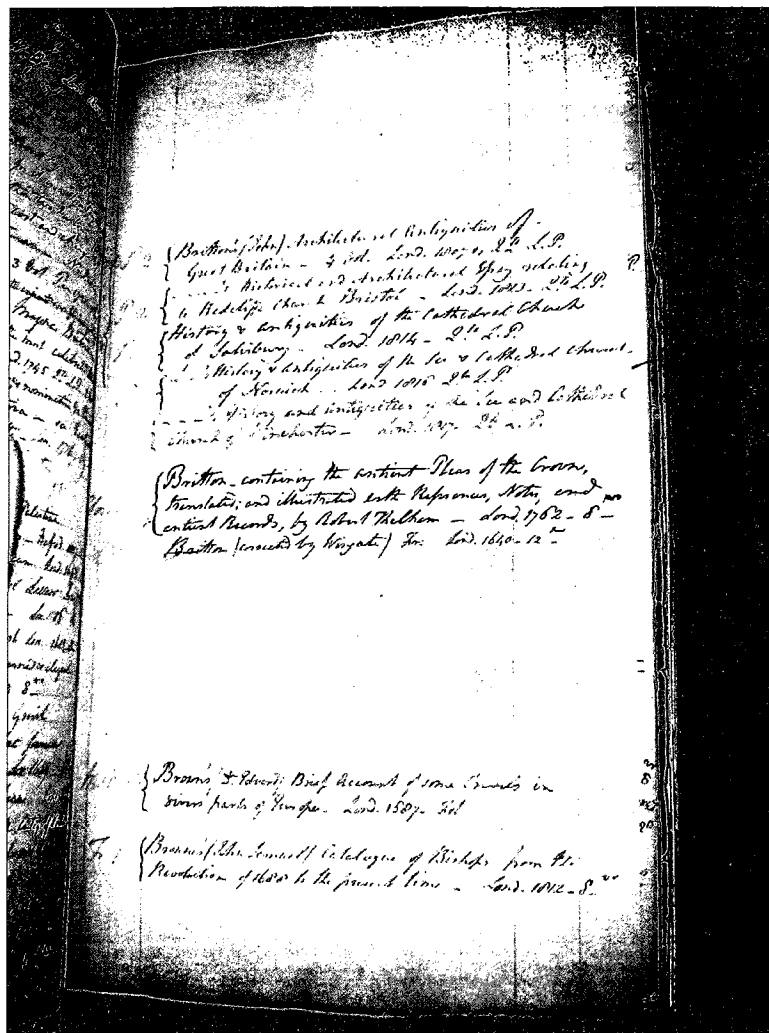subsequent acquisitions. Figure 5.20. shows a page from the Elliot catalog.

Figure 5.20. Page from the William Elliot catalog. Photograph by the author.

Not all entries provide notes, shelf location, title, and acquisition number. The

sole entry under "Z" lists a book regarding "Zaire River/usually called the

Congo/Narrative of an expedition . . ." This entry lists the work's full title, imprint

location and date, and size. Please see figure 5.21. for a photograph of this page.
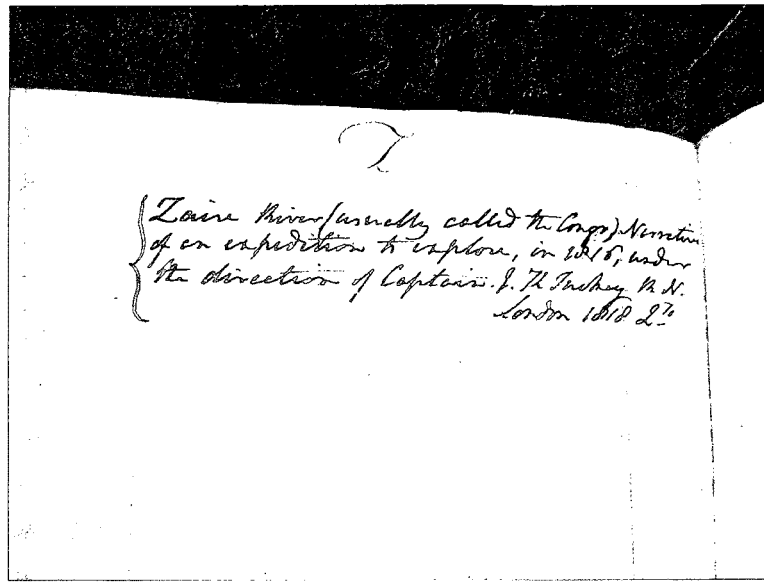
Figure 5.21. Page from William Elliot catalog, showing "Z" entry. Photograph by the author.

Bertram Ashburnham

The final catalog[43] examined belonged to Bertram, the fourth Earl of

Ashburnham. Born in 1797, Ashburnham carried the aristocratic bibliophile mantle that

Spencer had borne a generation before. He began buying books with his pocket money,

when he was a schoolboy at the elite London Westminster School.[44] His library grew,

earning comparisons with Spencer's collection. For example, Ashburnham's collection

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43. Grolier Club, "The Grolier Club Library Online Catalogue: Record for the Ashburnham Library Catalog," http://zippo.vtls.com/cgi-bin/grolier/chameleon?host=zippo.vtls.com 6403 DEFAULT&search=KEYWORD&function=CARDSCR&SourceScreen=INITREQ&sessionid=2 009020119344622028&skin=portal&conf=./chameleon.conf&lng=en&itemu1=1035&u1=1035& t1=ashburnham catalo(TRUNCATED) (accessed February 1, 2009).

44. F. S. E., "Bertram, Fourth Earl of Ashburnham, 1797-1878," in *Contributions Towards a Dictionary of English Book-Collectors: As Also of Some Foreign Collectors Whose Libraries Were Incorporated in English Collections Or Whose Books Are Chiefly Met with in England,* ed. Bernard Quaritch (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1892), 1. As the son of a landed earl, Ashburnham probably had more pocket money than many other students.

of Caxtons was considered second only to Spencer's Caxtons.[45] He also owned at least

four thousand manuscripts, from the early Middle Ages to the Renaissance.[46] When

Ashburnham died, his library was considered one of the premier private libraries in Great

Britain.[47]

Ashburnham's catalog was likely prepared during the period from 1870 to 1900,

long after the Grolier sheaf catalog had been created. Like Spencer's sheaf catalogs, the

Ashburnham catalog is extensive, comprising thirty-five volumes. Each of the

Ashburnham catalog's thirty-five volumes measures 22 centimeters wide and 10

centimeters high (22 inches and 8.5 inches, respectively) and was bound in brown half-

morocco and marbled paper. Figure 5.22. offers a view of the first volume.

Next page: **Figure 5.22. Ashburnham catalog, first volume.**
Photograph by the author.

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45. F. S. E., "Bertram, Fourth Earl of Ashburnham, 1797-1878," 1.

46. Fletcher, *English Book Collectors,* 382.

47. Ibid., 382.
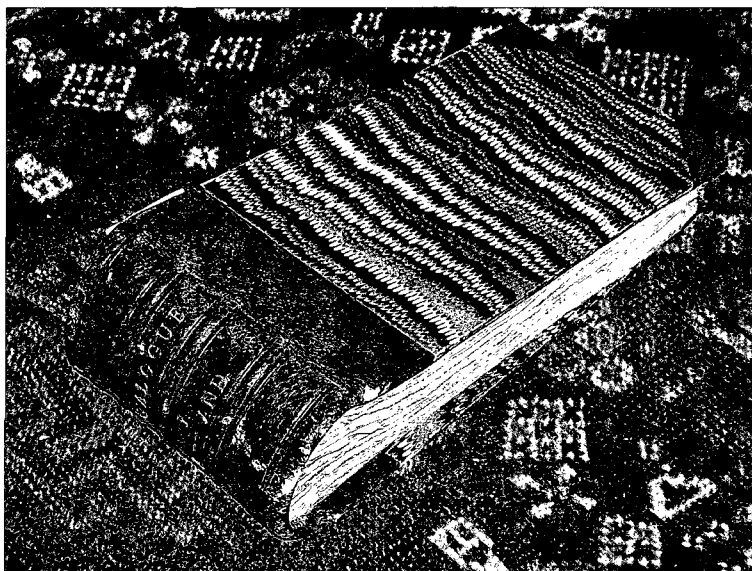
Like Spencer's sheaf catalogs, Ashburnham's catalog was written on paper slips. Both catalogs were organized alphabetically by author and include many similar bibliographical details, such as place and date of printing and physically descriptive information. A sample slip appears as figure 5.23. Some works were organized by type, such as chapbook or service book, rather than by author name.
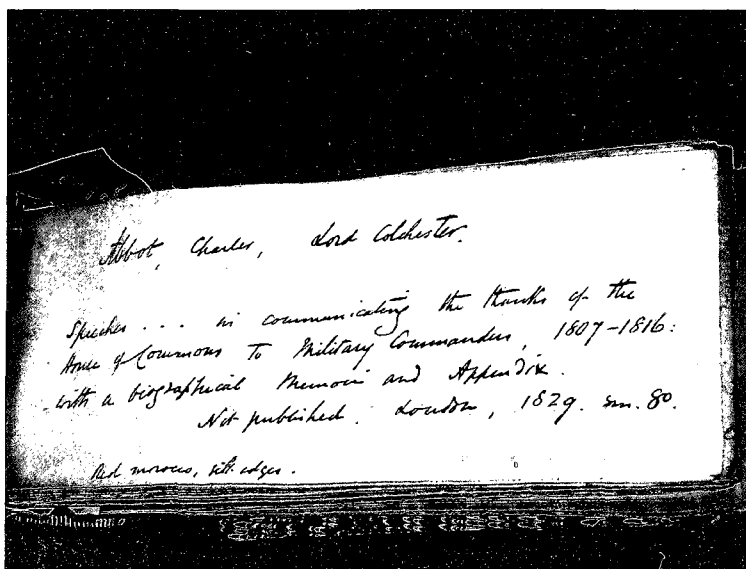

Figure 5.23. "Charles Abbot" slip, Ashburnham catalog.
Photograph by the author.

Several slips display extensive information about a particular work, reflecting

Ashburnham's intense interest in acquiring the rarest editions and most perfect copies of

antiquarian books.[48] Unfortunately, much of this information was written at various

angles, crammed tightly into small spaces, and cannot be understood. Please see figure

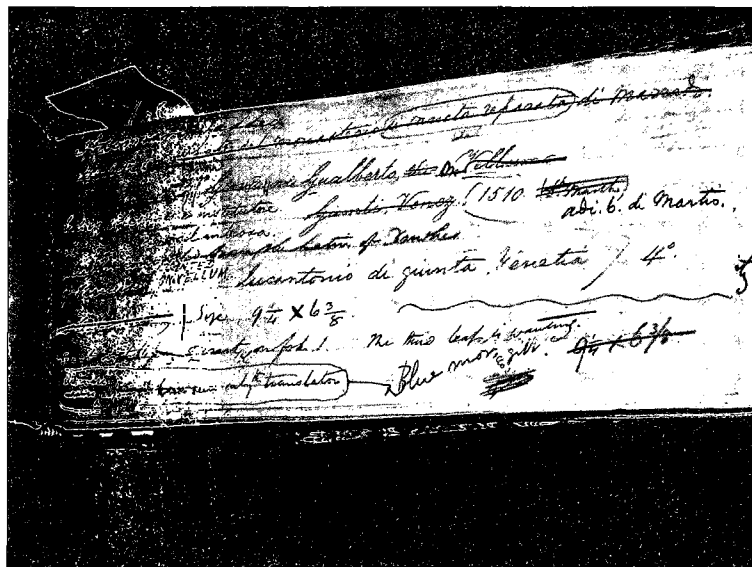5.24. for a photograph of one such slip.

Figure 5.24. "Adimari" slip, Ashburnham catalog. Photograph by the author.

While the Ashburnham catalog physically resembles the Spencer sheaf catalogs

more than any other private library catalog, the catalogs differ significantly.[49] First, each

volume of the Ashburnham catalog is permanently bound. The disadvantages of this

binding become apparent upon viewing the Ashburnham volumes: virtually every page

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48. Grolier Club, "Record for the Ashburnham Library Catalog."

49. The Ashburnham catalog physically resembles the Solander Slip Catalogue,
described in Chapter Two of this thesis, even more closely than it does the Spencer sheaf catalog.
The Solander volumes measure 11 centimeters high and 19 centimeters wide (4.33 inches and 7.5
inches, respectively) and thus are almost the same size as the Ashburnham volumes.

contains extensive edits, usually in more than one hand. Confounding one's ability to read the slips is the near-illegibility of most entries – it is nearly impossible to decipher most of the writing. It is not clear if these annotations were made before or after the volumes were bound. It is likely that, given how illegible many slips are, the cataloger would have exchanged the unreadable slips for cleaner ones before permanently binding the slips in fine goatskin. Even the edited Grolier sheaf slips have clean, fully readable text.

The Ashburnham catalog lacks the systematic orderliness that defines Spencer's sheaf catalogs. The sheaf catalogs follow a predictable and simple system so that a modern reader, over two hundred years after the catalogs were created, could theoretically find a book in one of Spencer's libraries. After searching for a title, author, or subject in the sheaf catalog, one would find the accession number in the Numerical Index and obtain the book's location, which was written to the right of the accession number. Some of the Ashburnham slips include press marks (shelf locations for books) but the slips do not regularly list this information. The Ashburnham catalog lists works only by author name, while the sheaf catalogs often list each work multiple times – by author, title, and subject.

Initially, the outer form of Ashburnham's multi-volume manuscript catalog appears to be innovative and useful. But after examining the catalog, and especially after comparing it to Spencer's sheaf catalogs, Ashburnham's manuscript volumes seem limited and impractical. Instead of advancing cataloging formats, it regresses somewhat, to the slip catalogs described by Gessner and early bibliographers in Chapter Two, in

which slips of paper were affixed to pages in bound books. Spencer's sheaf catalogs look forward, to the compact and more easily maintained card catalog and mechanical sheaf catalog formats. Spencer's sheaf catalogs demonstrate the power of an effective library catalog, while Ashburnham's contribution resembles less a catalog than it does an inventory – a highly detailed, annotated, and expertly and handsomely bound inventory.

The Significance of Spencer's Many Catalogs

Many bibliophiles attracted criticism that they collected books only for their rarity and monetary value; the actual texts were immaterial to the typical avaricious book collector. Spencer represents a compelling counter-figure, as he appears to have valued his collection for the knowledge it contained and not for his books' preciousness. He had many resources – money and the ability to borrow more, extensive shelving space, the freedom to travel abroad to buy desirable books, among other privileges – yet Spencer appears to have derived significant contentment from simply using his library.

While most collectors had rudimentary catalogs that did little more than inventory their collections, Spencer had multiple, unique tools for using his library. The number and variety of book catalogs Spencer created and owned conveys the deep attachment Spencer felt toward his collection; planning and creating a library catalog offered another chance to delve into his books.

The number of catalogs Spencer had also suggests the importance he attached to sharing his library with others. His descendant, the fifth Earl Spencer, lamented how infrequently visitors then used the Althorp library, unlike during the second Earl Spencer's lifetime. Having so many tools to access Spencer's books meant that his

visitors could use his collection almost as effectively as Spencer could. Anyone who used the Numerical Index along with one of Spencer's catalogs – the sheaf catalog or early printer catalog, for example – could find both the titles of works and the works themselves. It seems that Spencer did not want to enjoy his collection in solitude, caressing rare bindings and counting his Aldines. Spencer wanted to share his books with other readers who shared his great appreciation for literature, printing history, and knowledge.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The Sheaf Catalogs as a Historical Record

Spencer's sheaf catalogs present a singular opportunity to investigate two main themes: the evolution of library cataloging and a famed book collector's relationship with his equally celebrated collection. The first theme, regarding cataloging history, has received less attention in professional literature relating to library history; libraries, books and printing, and librarians are more frequent topics. However, by examining the tools that librarians, bibliographers, and their antecedents developed to manage book collections, one gains an essential and unique perspective on the more commonly treated topics in library history such as libraries, books and printing, and librarians. Library cataloging tools such as Spencer's sheaf catalogs show how readers organized their books, what qualities they valued in a book collection, and even whether and why they read the books they collected. More significantly for the library profession, cataloging history describes how librarians evolved from book custodians into professionals trained to highlight information stored within collections.

Spencer's sheaf catalogs represent more than a technological leap in library cataloging. They also reveal a little-known aspect of Spencer, a historical figure whose image has been solidly established for generations. Spencer has already been heavily documented as a consummate book collector, First Lord of the Admiralty, political figure, and nobleman. Reviewing Spencer's catalogs – both sheaf and manuscript

versions – shows a rarely examined aspect of the Earl: he was a librarian and life-long learner, passionately interested in acquiring and sharing knowledge.

The Sheaf Catalogs and Cataloging History

As a novel and effective cataloging tool, the sheaf catalogs were a milestone in library history. Spencer's sheaf catalogs are the earliest known library catalogs that were compact, amendable, and searchable across multiple entry points. No other library used such a cataloging format.[1] Until the late 1700s, catalogs were large books in either manuscript or, for large institutional libraries, printed form. Manuscript catalogs tended to have large amounts of unused paper, to allow for new acquisitions to be included; printed catalogs were usually supplemented with separately printed pamphlets or books that updated the original catalog.

The most well-known cataloging innovation – the 1791 French cataloging code – was not intended to help readers (or even librarians) find books to read. In fact, the cards generated under the French cataloging code were not meant to serve as a catalog; bibliographers alphabetized them and prepared folio-sized books that essentially inventoried French book and manuscript collections. Most of the slips were destroyed once the folios had been prepared. Using paper slips to alphabetize catalog entries was introduced decades before, but this process had never been followed on the vast, national scale implemented by the French in the late 1790s. This project did not create the first card catalog, though it very likely helped make the card format more familiar and acceptable.

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1. As described in Chapter Two of this thesis, possible exceptions are the Arsenal Library and Fathers of the Oratory library, both in France.

author and would not be limited to searching under subject classification.[2] Few catalogs incorporated these ideas; most were single-entry (by title or author) but some had indexes allowing an alternative entry point into the catalog. By presenting at least three entry points in one catalog (author, title, and subject) Spencer's sheaf catalogs embodied contemporary library management methodologies. His catalogs were years ahead of almost any institutional library's system.

While the sheaf catalog format is obscure today, Spencer's sheaf catalogs have been enduringly useful. Both catalogs were likely continued after Spencer's death, with the Rylands catalog being used by Rylands staff to catalog the Spencer collection. Rylands staff even used Spencer's Numerical Index as their own accessions book, registering Spencer-related personal letter collections and Spencer's manuscript catalogs.

The catalog's longevity may derive from its intended purpose – to help readers find books. As noted earlier, the catalog that at least one writer called "the first card catalog"[3] was actually a large-scale inventory; it did not help connect *readers* with books or manuscripts. Bertram Ashburnham's elegantly bound slip catalog is a sumptuous piece of cataloging history, but it does not function nearly as efficiently as Spencer's catalogs. Spencer's sheaf catalogs may have been the first compact library catalog intended to help a reader find books. The catalogs have therefore continued to fulfill their intended purpose so long as there has been an identifiable Spencer collection. This

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2. As described in Chapter Two, many post-medieval catalogs were organized first by subject classification, with each work entered alphabetically by author or title. Works therefore appeared only once in a catalog.

3. Cole, "An Early French General Catalog,'" 330.

At some point, most likely during the eighteenth century, someone decided that the paper slips would serve as the library catalog. This innovation saved librarians hours of duplicative work. There was no need to copy or paste the slips onto large books or sheets of paper. The paper slips had an added benefit that would revolutionize librarianship and information-seeking in general: they were capable of being relatively easy to interfile and amend, many users could search a single card catalog (rather than having one person monopolize an entire volume of a book-form catalog), and they occupied less space than most book-form catalogs.

As effective and simple as the proto-card catalog format was, it did not become commonplace until the late 1800s, by which time the card catalog and sheaf catalog formats had been refined. The sheaf catalog in the Grolier Club's collection was very likely already a century old; it may have been initiated as early as 1790, the year Spencer hired his first librarian, Tommaso de Ocheda. As the older of the two sheaf catalogs, the Grolier catalog appears to be the first card or sheaf catalog in the United Kingdom and possibly in the western world. Subsequent research may place the Rylands sheaf catalog in a similar chronological place in history.

Spencer's sheaf catalog does more than find a book by a particular title or author; it allows one to search for certain subjects. Readers who did not know a book's title or author had another route to finding a book – a subject classification search. Bibliographers and librarians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had advocated that library catalogs have multiple entry points. Scholars could then find works by title or

study searched the 2009 Rylands OPAC for books named in Spencer's sheaf catalog and with few exceptions found each book. Thus, the sheaf catalogs are probably two of the oldest library catalogs that can still be used according to their original purpose. In fact, they are two of the oldest still-existing compact library catalogs.

In the early 1990s, many librarians were eager to shed their card catalogs and adopt the online public access catalog (OPAC).[4] While the OPAC's early years were turbulent for librarians and users alike, this format eventually became more accurate and simpler to use. While some may wistfully long for a well-worn card catalog, grubby from years of searchers thumbing through its records, most users would head directly for the library's computer terminals. The OPAC's success has made the card catalog virtually extinct in most U.S. libraries.

As artifacts of library and Spencer history, the catalogs remain valuable to librarians, book collectors, and other scholars. Decades before the card catalog became ubiquitous, the sheaf catalog was a viable cataloging form. Many librarians considered it superior to the card catalog: it was more compact, cheaper to shelve (as it did not require a specially made case), and initially seemed more appealing because it was in a familiar book-like form. It is likely that, in the early twentieth century, many librarians lamented the sheaf catalog, viewing its successful rival, the card catalog, as pessimistically as Nicholson Baker did the OPAC. However, the sheaf catalog suffered even more ignominy than the card catalog has: while the OPAC gradually made card catalogs

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4. Baker, "Discards."

obsolete, most library users can identify a card catalog. On the contrary, the sheaf catalog vanished and is virtually unknown in the United States, even to librarians.

The Sheaf Catalogs and Spencer as Collector, Reader, and Librarian

Almost all of the scholarship and popular literature on George John, the second Earl Spencer, emphasizes the extraordinary book collection he amassed. This focus has neglected to include Spencer's sheaf catalogs, though Spencer's fame and social position have very likely helped to preserve the catalogs and ensure that they were not destroyed or discarded. Studying Spencer's sheaf catalogs, along with his multiple manuscript catalogs, expands and enriches the historical understanding of Spencer the book collector.

Spencer's catalogs expose an infrequently considered aspect of the celebrated collector: Spencer as librarian and scholar.[5] In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many book collectors were enraptured with beautiful bindings, rare editions, early printing, and other characteristics associated with bibliomania. Such collectors – at least according to their critics – theoretically disregarded their books' contents. Spencer's catalogs challenge this view. Examining how he organized and managed his collection uncovers the lasting relationship he had with books and reading.

The sheaf catalogs show that Spencer was intimately involved in managing and controlling his vast collection. He was also intellectually riveted by his books and committed to gaining access to the information stored within his libraries; as noted above,

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5. Despite his great intellectual curiosity and apparent interest in librarianship, Spencer had many flaws. Chapter Three describes Spencer's cruel response to British sailors, who mutinied to protest inhumane working and living conditions. Spencer's erudite librarian, Ocheda, had already managed a rich and extensive library and prepared a catalog of the collection when Spencer hired him in 1790. Despite this desirable experience, Ocheda's starting salary was only £67, less than the price Spencer typically paid for most incunables.

the sheaf catalogs opened Spencer's collection both to himself and to other users. For example, after buying the Spencer collection in 1892, the Rylands used the three-drawer catalog to identify the books that (1) came to the Rylands, (2) stayed at Althorp, (3) could not be found, (4) were given to another institution, and (5) were disposed of in other ways. In 1864, Edward Edwards also consulted the sheaf catalog and included a facsimile of a slip, though the facsimile was typeset and thus did not reflect the sheaf catalog's manuscript qualities.

Edwards's description distinguishes him as the only person (other than Spencer and Ocheda) known to have viewed the slips in one of Spencer's sheaf catalogs. Given Spencer's propensity to share his library, it is possible that other readers used the sheaf catalog. It is also possible that only Spencer or his librarian used the catalog; Spencer's librarian may have served as a personal search engine, hunting for books by title, author, or subject as requested by the library's visitors. Such a limited range of catalog users would explain why the sheaf catalogs have received so little historical attention.[6]

An evolving image of Spencer emerges from his sheaf catalogs. He was more than an exceptional book collector; Spencer seemed to thoroughly enjoy organizing and managing his libraries. He firmly devoted himself to several cataloging endeavors so that he – and his friends – could extract knowledge from the vast literary repositories at Althorp and Spencer House. Even Dibdin, described erroneously as Spencer's librarian, was not nearly as interested in managing Spencer's collection as the collector himself was; given Dibdin's extensive transcription, translation, historical, and other errors, he

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6. This scenario raises another question: why house an "administrative use only" catalog in a handsome, mahogany chest?

manifested little interest in the content of the books he described so lavishly in the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana* and other publications.

Spencer's remarkable and unique sheaf catalogs uncover a little-known aspect of the collector. Long considered a wealthy, acquisitive, and focused bibliophile, Spencer was also a secret librarian. He knew how to manage a library: he knew where his books were, which books he owned by certain authors, how many Caxtons he owned, and many other aspects of his collection. Most importantly, he relished opening his library to others who, as Spencer apparently did, delighted in acquiring and sharing knowledge.

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