

Libraries of Physicians: A Review of the Literature

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THE full story of the great physician book collectors has yet to be told. There is no book on the subject, and the general histories of book collecting usually do not have much to say about physicians. Although there have been many articles about individual collectors, there have been few attempts to survey the whole field. Moreover, the general surveys all have a strong national bias.

The following review of the literature on physicians as book collectors omits the literature on bookplates, as this subject was covered last year by Dr. Samuel Radbill (*AB Bookman's Weekly*, April 28, 1986, pp. 1941-1945). The general literature on book collecting and articles on a single collector or a very small group of collectors have also been omitted.

The first of the general surveys in English is W. J. Bishop's "Some Medical Bibliophiles and Their Libraries," *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 3 (1948):229-262. Bishop, who was librarian of the Wellcome Historical Medical Library, discusses a dozen European book collectors, half of them German, but his long article is mainly concerned with British collectors through the end of the 18th Century.

Thomas E. Keys, former librarian of the Mayo Clinic, has a chapter in his book, *Applied Medical Library Practice* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1958), on "The Development of Private Medical Libraries," pp. 148-189. He devotes four and a half pages to British collectors, six pages to European collectors, and 27 to American collectors. He also gives a three-page list of references.

Another book with a chapter on physicians' libraries is John L. Thornton's *Medical Books, Libraries and Collectors*, 2nd ed., (London: Andre Deutsch, 1966). Thornton, librarian of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, describes the libraries of 62 physicians, 36 of whom are British, 15 European, 10 American and one Canadian (Osler) in the chapter, "Private

Medical Libraries," pp. 264-298.

The earliest article on physician book collectors appears to be by the distinguished German historian of medicine, Karl Sudhoff, whose July 1921, paper, "Medizinische Bibliotheken, Eine historische Plauderei," was prefixed to a book dealer's catalogue, that of G. Fock of Leipzig. Eight years later it was reprinted in *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin*, 21 (1929):296-310.

The equally famous Swiss historian of medicine, Henry Sigerist, published an article in a 1926 catalogue of the Leipzig book dealer Thieme on "Der Arzt und sein Buch," but this is about books rather than about collectors.

In April 1937, the Swiss magazine *Ciba Zeitschrift* devoted an entire issue (4. Jahrgang, Nummer 44) to physicians as bibliophiles. The issue contains three articles by Konrad Farner of Basle: one on the history of book collecting, "Zur Geschichte der Bibliophilie," pp. 1510-1515; one on physicians as bibliophiles, "Bibliophile Ärzte," pp. 1516-1524; and one on the libraries of physicians, "Arzte-Bibliotheken," pp. 1525-1534. These articles are followed by a bibliography, p. 1535, and a number of short notes on related topics, pp. 1537-1544.

Farner mentions nearly 90 physician book collectors, yet his articles are not cited by Bishop, Keys or Thornton, and do not even seem to be well-known in Europe. Farner's articles also have the distinction of being well-illustrated with portraits of physicians, often shown with book in hand or with a shelf of books behind them.

Barely worth mentioning is a brief article, "Bibliotheca Medica," *M.D. Medical Newsmagazine*, 3, no. 8 (August, 1959): 137-140. Another rather short article is Robert Herringer's "Über Bibliophile der Ärzte," *Librarium*, 2 (1959):68-74. This survey lists 14 collectors, one of whom, Wolfgang Laz (1514-1565) of Vienna, is not mentioned in any of the other articles in this review.

Dr. Morris H. Saffron's "The Physician as Collector," *Academy of Medicine of New Jersey Bulletin*, 6 (1960):266-278, ranges widely and is not limited to collectors of books. It is, however, mainly about book collectors.

Not seen by this writer is an exhibition catalogue, "Medical Book Collectors," issued by the library of the Royal College of Physicians of London in 1974. It is one of a series of mimeographed exhibition catalogues published by the library, and copies in this country seem to be scarce indeed.

A highly specialized article, which

nevertheless crosses borders, is Danièle Iancu-Agou's "Préoccupations Intellectuelles des Médecins Juifs au Moyen-Age: Inventaires de Bibliothèques," *Provence Historique*, 26 (1976):21-45. It is a study of the manuscript inventories of the libraries of six medieval Jewish physicians, three of them French.

Worth mentioning here, though a bibliography rather than an essay, is Ellen Wells' "Scientists' Libraries: A Handlist of Printed Sources," *Annals of Science*, 40 (1983):317-389. This bibliography lists some 1,200 titles relating to about 880 scientists, 640 of whom were physicians. There are 270 Americans in her handlist, of whom 220 were physicians. It has an index of professions at the end, but the index includes only the non-physicians. The bibliography lists catalogues of scientists' libraries as well as articles about these libraries and related topics. The catalogues are mostly auction catalogues. This handlist is currently being revised and considerably expanded.

American Collectors

Dr. Archibald Malloch, librarian of the New York Academy of Medicine, published an article, "A Century of American Medical Libraries, 1830-1930," in the commemorative volume, *Celebration of the Centennial of the Library of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of the State of Maryland, 1830-1930*, Baltimore, 1931, pp. 3-11. Although not limited to private libraries, this article does list a fair number of private collections which formed the basis of medical school or society libraries.

Two quite brief articles are Morris Fishbein's "When Doctors Collect," *Reading and Collecting*, 1 (1936):6, 19, which treats the work of the 18th-century Swiss physician/bibliographer, Albrecht von Haller, and the collections of ten 20th-century American bibliophiles; and Henry R. Viets' anonymously published essay, "A Passing Era in Medical History," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 237 (1947):106-107, which mentions six American collectors.

More substantial is Thomas E. Keys' "Libraries of Some Twentieth-Century American Bibliophilic Physicians," *Library Quarterly*, 24 (1954):21-34, which describes the collecting activities of the Warren family in Boston and 13 individual collectors.

Keys' book, *Applied Medical Library Practice*, cited above, is essential for the earlier and particularly the Colonial period. It also has a long chapter on "Representative Medical Libraries in the United States," pp. 190-257, which mentions a

number of physicians whose collections were given, sold or bequeathed to these libraries.

Lastly there is Herman H. Henkle's "The Physician as Book Collector: Notes on Famous Libraries," *Journal of the International College of Surgeons*, 34, Sect. 1 (1960):101-117. Henkle uses association copies in the John Crerar Library, now a branch of the University of Chicago Library, as a basis for discussing nine collectors, one British and the rest American. He notes that the Chicago surgeon, Nicholas Senn, had 10,689 volumes and 14,501 pamphlets, which puts him in the front rank among American physician-collectors. By comparison, the Osler catalogue has 7,784 entries, pamphlets and all.

British Collectors

The main sources of information about British physician collectors are the writings of Bishop and Thornton cited above and Thornton's article, "St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and its Connection with Eminent Book Collectors," *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 6 (1951):481-490.

Note also M. I. Lattimore's "Early Naval Medical Libraries, Personal and Corporate," *Journal of the Royal Naval*

Medical Service, 69 (1983):107-111, 156-160, which, however, the present writer was unable to see.

Continental Collectors

The only article about French physician collectors seems to be Geneviève Nichole-Genty's "Bibliothèques de Médecins," *Presse Médicale*, 66, no. 56 (1958):1301-1302. Her article begins with two of the earliest Italian collectors of whose libraries inventories have survived. The remainder of the article is about 17 French collectors from the 17th through the 20th Centuries.

Of related interest is P.-A. Créhange's recent book, *Les Livres Anciens de Médecine et de Pharmacie; Promenade à travers la Médecine du Passé*. (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Amateur 1984). Chapter XIII, pp. 225-244, is entitled, "La Bibliothèque du Médecin," and chapter XIV, pp. 245-260, is on "Les Outils de Travail du Médecin Bibliophile; Les Bibliographies et les Catalogues des Libraires." On p. 253 is a list of the most celebrated French physician book collectors of modern times, but Créhange's lavishly illustrated book is more about what and how to collect than who did the collecting.

A fair amount has been written about German collectors. Dr. Alfons Fischer of Karlsruhe described the "Privatbibliotheken deutscher Ärzte im 15.-19. Jahrhundert" in *Arztliche Mitteilungen nebst Anzeiger*, 32 (1931):1013-1015. The libraries of some 18th-century German physicians were described by Dr. Gunter Mann, librarian of the Senckenberg Library in Frankfurt-am-Main in his article, "Von des Arztes Freundschaft zum Buche; Arztbibliotheken des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Medizinischer Monatsspiegel*, 8 (1959):265-272.

More recently Bernd Lorenz, a librarian at the University of Regensburg, published "Notizen zu Privatbibliotheken deutscher Ärzte des 15.-17. Jahrhunderts," *Sudhoffs Archiv*, 67 (1983):190-198, and "Notizen zu Privatbibliotheken deutscher Ärzte des 18.-19. Jahrhunderts," *Sudhoffs Archiv*, 69 (1985):50-61. The second of these articles puts some emphasis on bookplates, and an Italian translation of it was published as, "Il medico bibliofilo," *KOS*, 1, n. 5 (giugno 1984):102-111, with many reproductions of bookplates. The original article was not illustrated.

Dr. Lorenz also published an article about the physician book collectors of Nurnberg, "Nurnberger Ärzte als Buchersammler: Medizinische Privatbibliotheken des 15.-18. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nurnberg*, 72 (1985):75-83.

Some early Dresden physician collectors are discussed in Christian Alschner's "Medizinische Literatur in Dresdner Bürgerbibliotheken des 15./16. Jahrhunderts," *NTM-Schriftenreihe für Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften, Technik, und Medizin*, 15 (1978):56-62, although the

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article is not limited to physicians, and in Heinz Egon Kleine-Natrop's short book, *Über Bucher, Autoren und medizinische Bibliotheken in Dresden*, Dresden, Steinkopff, 1968.

Although much has been written about individual Italian collectors, there is no overview of book collecting by Italian physicians.

Carlo De Frede published a booklet about the libraries of lawyers and physicians of Naples in the 15th Century, *Biblioteche di Giuristi e Medici Napoletani del Quattrocento*, Napoli, 1973 (Uomini e cose della vecchia Napoli, 2).

Marion F. Dondale, librarian of the Albany Medical College, wrote a chapter on "Medical Libraries" for the second edition of the *Medical Library Association Handbook of Medical Library Practice*, edited by Janet Doe and Mary Louise Marshall (Chicago: American Library Association, 1956). On p. 3 Dondale wrote, "The owners of private libraries in Italy seem to have been among the first to bequeath or give their collections to institutions. Giancarlo Guidi (15) lists many private libraries from the 13th Century to the present day." Reference 15 on p. 20 of her chapter is "Guidi, Giancarlo, *Biblioteche di medici nel passato e nel presente*. In preparation."

Guidi's book, if that is what it was, apparently never got into print, and Ms. Dondale has since passed away. If anyone can tell what became of the manuscript of Guidi's work, this writer would very much like to know.

The only study of Polish physician collectors, at least in non-Slavic languages, appears to be Johan Lachs' article on the reading of physicians and medical students in Cracow in the 16th Century, "Die Lektüre der Krakauer Ärzte und Studierenden im 16. Jahrhundert," *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin*, 7 (1914):206-217. The article is based on manuscript inventories of libraries in the Cracow city archives.

A private library provides insight into a collector's interests and tastes, the sources of his ideas, and to some extent his affluence and his circle of friends. In reviewing Pearl Kibre's book on Pico della Mirandola's library, M. F. Ashley Montagu wrote:

One of the simplest, and generally most reliable, ways of ascertaining the breadth of a man's interests and thus something of his mental furniture is to look at the backs of the books upon the shelves of his library. In this way one may learn more about a man than years of association with him or with his writings could teach one. (*Isis*, 26 [1936]:159)

The study of the libraries of physicians is a valuable and interesting one. Although the literature on this subject is probably more extensive than, say, that on the libraries of lawyers or the clergy, it is still full of gaps. Much more needs to be done before we have anything like a well-rounded view of the subject. ■

Medical History Seminar

□ "Modern Medicine: Its Roots in Venice and Padua," a six-day program of seminars and on-site visits, will be held July 5-12, in Venice, Italy.

The seminar is co-sponsored by the Medical Alumni Association and the Division of Continuing Education of the Bowman Gray School of Medicine of Wake Forest University.

Directed to a medical audience with some background in the history of medicine, the program will familiarize participants with the enormous debt owed by western medicine to the cities of Venice and Padua.

Between the 14th and 18th Centuries, this small area was the scene of many of the most dramatic advances in the study of anatomy and physiology, in medical education, in the treatment of plague victims, in the establishment of hospitals (including psychiatric hospitals) and in the development of medical botany and pharmacy.

The program's faculty of historians of medicine and art will explore the nature, causes and subsequent impact of these achievements in a series of talks, discussions and site tours.

Among the sites to be visited are the Medical School and Anatomical Theater of the University of Padua, the Paduan botanical garden (a rare survival from the 16th Century), hospitals, pharmacies and psychiatric institutions in Venice, the first *lazzaretto*, or quarantine camp, as well as museums holding paintings, prints, books and instruments important in the history of medicine.

Sessions begin Monday, July 6, with registration and orientation. The lecture that afternoon will be "Introduction to Venice: The City and Its History, 1400-1800."

On Tuesday morning a site visit will

center on "The Organization of the City and Its Focal Points." The afternoon lecture will be "Western Medicine and the Institution of the Hospital."

Wednesday morning, the site visit will focus on Venetian hospitals, and includes the exhibit at the Scuola de San Marco. That afternoon the lecture will be on "Medical Practice and the Special Contribution of Venetian and Jewish Physicians."

The site visits on Friday will be to San