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## Looking back from 1700: problems in locating the country house library

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## 11. Looking back from 1700: problems in locating the country house library

Susie West

Studies and Cabinets, [...] not being much known, or visited, remain buried in perpetual silence.<sup>1</sup>

‘The care of books’ was how J.W. Clark memorably gathered together his research on historical libraries ‘and their fittings’, as his title page proclaims.<sup>2</sup> This chapter carries on looking at the care of books, by early modern private owners, a group who rose in succession to Clark’s dominant medieval ecclesiastical keepers of books. Taking care of books suggests a degree of thought in their arrangement, a level of investment in their housing, and perhaps a degree of anticipation for their future lives, as heirlooms carefully catalogued. As the examples from the Norfolk gentry discussed here show, not all heirlooms were cared for, nor were their resting places preserved, but enough care was passed down through a number of families to demonstrate widespread practices in living with books. Specifically, the owners of early modern country houses invested in making book rooms to house their collections; the failure of these rooms to survive is the result of the success of the idea of a library in the country house. The early rooms, relatively modest in scale and assigned unobtrusive spaces within the domestic plan, were successively remodelled and repositioned around the house to become, by the late eighteenth century, part of the public suite of reception rooms and an essential component of the nineteenth-century entertainment for house parties. This chapter looks back from the viewpoint of 1700, a point in time when private libraries in England are still elusive to architectural historians compared to the rapid increase in known examples from the 1720s, and considers the nature of their invisibility and how it might be investigated.

Research on the practices of keeping and using books, gathered together as the history of reading, investigates how readers stored, processed and made use of the content of their books. This is a flourishing field, with the past decade of research producing rich accounts of individuals and networks of readers and writers. Print culture provides the material and intellectual basis for historians interested in the early modern history of ideas, of reformed religion, of the emergence of science, of literature and political debate. In England, the seventeenth century and its political and religious fractures have proved particularly fruitful contexts.<sup>3</sup> The circulation of new forms of print, such as the first news sheets, were consumed in now-familiar locations such as urban coffee houses and, after the Restoration, in the emerging clubs and societies.<sup>4</sup> These spaces for the consumption of print, and for ensuing debate, have been characterised as spaces for male, civic discourses.<sup>5</sup> More recent scholarship has begun to attend to how the same forms of print reached the country house, keeping the household in touch with metropolitan news. This work brings a welcome dynamic to our sense of what was read regularly in the homes of the landed classes.

However, the material conditions of keeping a book collection, as a library, within the early modern country house have received less attention.<sup>6</sup> This is partly a problem of evidence, in that pre-1700 library rooms and their intact collections are almost invisible, and partly a division of labour between modern disciplines. Working with the current state of the history of reading scholarship and with a detailed survey of a county network of book owners, some of the gaps in our understanding of the early modern country house as a space for books can be addressed.

This chapter addresses some of the challenges for scholars investigating aspects of the consumption of print within the early modern country house; it offers new case studies for the physical presence of book collections and extends the understanding of how the pre-1700

book room in English country houses can be made visible. The following discussion draws attention to the chronological problems attendant on largely archive-based research.

### **The three chronologies**

A county survey, based on Norfolk, offers an insight into the ‘three chronologies’ of houses, their library rooms and their book collections.<sup>7</sup> The combined resources of surviving country houses, lost houses and their archives, architectural and bibliographical scholarship were assembled to produce a table of when the country houses were built, when the first reference to a book room was dated and when the first reference to a book collection could be established. The evidence was gathered for the date range 1660-1830, although earlier evidence was noted. From this survey, sixteen houses were identified with evidence for book collections before 1700, and four with presumed ownership of books.

The table summarises the Norfolk families and their houses discussed in this chapter, according to their place within the ‘three chronologies’. The first eight houses are discussed as short case studies for their evidence for book ownership. The four houses with assumed book ownership are briefly mentioned in connection with the problem of the lack of direct evidence. The remaining eight houses are not discussed here (their evidence for book rooms has been given priority elsewhere) but need to be included as part of the total picture available for Norfolk country house book ownership before 1700.<sup>8</sup> The table suggests that the date of the house does not have a direct relationship to the survival of evidence for book ownership or for a book room; houses were periodically remodelled and updated internally to incorporate new uses for rooms. Knowing that families had books in the seventeenth century is also unrelated to the availability of evidence for how they kept them. The most useful class

of evidence for the book room chronology is the survival of early inventories; this table is really a commentary on the nature of the family archives.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Before considering some of the problems of working with these results, I would like to emphasise that the sample includes families and their landed estates from across the socio-economic layers of the resident peerage and county gentry. The eight Norfolk houses who form the case studies of this discussion span social layers of the landed classes. The resident nobility by the end of the seventeenth century were the recently ennobled Viscounts Townshend of Raynham Hall, and the Pastons, Earls of Yarmouth at Oxnead Hall. The knight baronets (KB) were (including the Townshend family, KB 1617) Bedingfeld (KB 1661) of Oxburgh Hall and Holland (KB 1629) of Quidenham Hall. Jacobean wealth from the law raised the Cokes of Godwick to larger landholdings and the purchase of old Holkham in 1612; in contrast, the Walpoles of old Houghton Hall had not yet acquired the fortune of the future Sir Robert Walpole. Old Holkham and old Houghton would be spectacularly rebuilt in the eighteenth-century while retaining their foundation collection of family books. The smallest landowner was the Buxton family at Channons and the newest was Sir Cyril Wyche, former Secretary of State for Ireland.

Sixteen houses (47%) out of the 34 that were possible to investigate in detail had evidence for book collections before 1700, the earliest dating back to 1500. This sample divides into eight houses that also had evidence for library rooms: a mere eight examples, clustering from 1660 to 1700, although the earliest reference to a study was in 1588. This sample of 16 book collections yielding evidence for 8 book rooms is a 50% success rate for the historian i.e. it informs our understanding of the evidential problems to a greater degree

than it advances an understanding of the country house library. I do not believe that it represents anything like a reality of only eight book rooms in the county of Norfolk before 1700. Overall, deriving only eight book rooms from the original 34 houses (owned by established county families, regardless of how many times they rebuilt their homes) leaves a 23% possibility that a pre-1700 library room can be identified from any archive sources. So in any detailed investigation of a number of family archives before 1830, one in two may reveal a book collection but only one in four may produce what the architectural historian is searching for.

This rapid reduction in the sample size as the research question moves from books to rooms is a clear indication that the results should not be interpreted at face value. This is to return to my opening point, that by 1700 the culture of the book (in print and in manuscript circulation) was woven in to the culture of the landed classes. The landowners of Norfolk before 1700 were undoubtedly readers and owners of books; it is also worth noting that the county families shared a tradition of sending their sons to the University of Cambridge. Here, the students would encounter the 'care of books' in college libraries, mainly first floor gallery spaces set up with the stall system, of which Wren's Trinity College library (1675) was the latest and most elegant example. There were plenty of visual models for housing a book collection.

The evidence for book ownership, reduced as it is, provides the reason for questioning the low results for library rooms. Eight Norfolk houses with good evidence for book ownership before 1700, have left no evidence at all as to how or where. These largely unremarked houses and their families represent a group of book owners rarely seen in the published scholarly literature on libraries or reading. This is partly because they do not provide substantial catalogues with an individual collector as a historical focus for analysis and also that there are few surviving personal records of the experience of reading. Instead,

inventories, accounts, sale catalogues and the occasional legal dispute dominate the range of sources and provide some contexts for provenanced books and the ‘lost rooms’ in surviving houses. The following account summarises these eight examples of pre-1700 libraries that have lost their rooms. They are grouped into the pre-1600 collections and the seventeenth-century collections.

### **The pre-1600 library collections**

Two early collections from Norfolk country houses emerged from the survey of 34 family archives: the well-known origins of the library of the Coke family of Holkham and the less well-known foundation of the library of the Townshend family of Raynham Hall. Both these families have continuously owned their landed estates since at least the dates of the book evidence, and both houses have been rebuilt but survive today. Raynham Hall offers the best example of the frustration of working with good evidence for long-term book ownership and collecting, but with a visual source that denies the existence of a book room.

Raynham Hall is the present house of the Townshend family, Viscounts Townshend, and it is the successor seat to East Raynham Old Hall, the family’s late medieval house. Sir Roger Townshend (d.1493) owned over 40 manuscripts and printed books, over half of which were legal volumes.<sup>9</sup> The books were mainly kept in ‘large chests in the vault at Raynham’, a room with a chimney which should therefore be thought of as one with a vaulted (stone) ceiling.<sup>10</sup> Continuity of ownership is demonstrated with his son who listed 26 of the volumes in an early sixteenth-century memorandum book, with 5 further volumes.<sup>11</sup> The founder’s great-great grandson, the builder of the present hall, was the first baronet, Sir Roger Townshend (1588-1637). He inherited some of the books of his maternal grandfather, Sir Nathaniel Bacon (1549-1622) of Stiffkey Hall, Norfolk. Sir Nathaniel’s will divided his 286 books amongst his family: the English texts to his wife and daughters, the French law

books to his grandson Roger Townshend, and his Latin books to his grandson Henry Gawdy. Sir Roger bought three books about architecture in 1619 when designing the present Raynham Hall, however his will and the 1637 post-mortem inventory omit any reference to books.<sup>12</sup> Later, the collection was something worth showing to the gentleman architect Sir Roger Pratt. Pratt wrote to Horatio, Baron Townshend (1630-87), referring to ‘the unexhausted literature of your Ldshps numerous great volumes of the elder & later English authors, & Spanish & French authors’ and to Townshend’s grandfather’s ‘many Italian and French books of architecture’, lightheartedly asking to be Townshend’s library keeper at Raynham.<sup>13</sup> Pratt was clearly impressed by the quality and range of books he saw at Raynham. And yet..., architectural floor plans made for the royal progress around Norfolk in 1671 name every room but do not name a library or study.<sup>14</sup> It is not until c.1729 that the ‘old library’ is mentioned, on the occasion of moving its contents into the newly created (and present) library room on the ground floor. It is impossible to deduce where this old library was within the house or when it was created, but it is mostly likely to have been when the interiors of the 1619 house were finished from 1659-62.

The great library collection at the eighteenth-century Holkham Hall is probably best known as the result of a precocious Grand Tour collecting campaign by Thomas Coke, later 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leicester, undertaken before he rebuilt old Holkham from 1734. Aside from this burst of activity, Holkham’s multiple libraries contain generations of family books, demonstrating the personal interests of their purchasers. Indeed, the present Long Library in the eighteenth-century house was designed to hold the inherited collections, while Thomas Coke’s Grand Tour acquisitions remained in his London house. The old hall had been the home of the Coke family since 1612, although the Norfolk-born Chief Justice Edward Coke (1552-1634) had already begun to build up estates in the parish. The family books begin with ‘Wenefred Coke, widow’ after 1543, Sir Edward’s mother, and his mother-in-law Anne



Arrowsmith's prayer book. Sir Edward himself was eulogised on his tombstone as a living library and he bequeathed his books as heirlooms. By 1679 there were books valued at £60 (if a shilling per volume is a rough valuation, this suggests 1,200 volumes). Thomas's parents, Edward and Carey, were both keen book buyers but spent beyond their means, both dying young in 1707. Trustees reserved £193 of books for Thomas's inheritance, a considerable increase in numbers to shelve at the old hall. Nothing is known of the library room before 1707, although the antiquarian Peter Le Neve saw Sir Edward Coke's books there and the trustees intended to commission a catalogue in 1708 (not known today).<sup>15</sup>

### **The post-1600 libraries**

The minor gentry Buxton family lived at Channons Hall, near Tibenham, in Norfolk. John Buxton I (1608-1660) and his wife Margaret (d. 1687) built up a collection together, although the scale is unknown. John's will directed that some of the book's were his wife's property to keep for her own use and the rest were to be held in trust for whichever of their sons began a professional career (as opposed to running the family estates). The Buxton books are known from personal accounts from 1627, purchases made in London, and some provenanced surviving books, which passed to the later family house at Shadwell. Nothing survives of Channons except one image, and there is no indication of how John and Margaret housed their books. They bought books they wanted to use, read or enjoy with neighbours, from standard law books to about 50 play texts, in English or translation into English and recently published: a household resource.<sup>16</sup>

The Buxton's library is the earliest of the seventeenth-century group that has been analysed, but a much older collection has yet to be investigated fully. The old house at Houghton, home of the Walpole family who had owned the estate from 1307, had a study by 1588. With continuity of family ownership of the old house, it is reasonable to assume that

the Elizabethan study contents also survived into the seventeenth century but there is no known evidence that illuminates the nature of the study or the collection until 1663, when only £3 of books were valued.<sup>17</sup> Subsequent accounts and surviving books with family signatures suggest that each generation added to the collection. Sir Robert's mother, Mary Burwell, brought some of her father's books with her, and added hers; Sir Robert's father, Colonel Robert Walpole, was cited by Roger North for 'study and learning extraordinary.'<sup>18</sup> The old house survived while the present Houghton Hall was built (from 1720); by 1721 Walpole's steward was complaining that the study in the old house was overrun by destructive mice. This collection was catalogued shortly after 1717, listing 850 titles.<sup>19</sup> A preliminary review of dated titles in the present collection suggests that a later seventeenth-century collection survives, with contributions from several generations of Walpoles and their relatives.<sup>20</sup>

The survival of a late medieval house as well as continuity of family ownership does not guarantee early visibility of a book room. Oxburgh Hall, built by the 1480s and still in the occupation of the original family of Bedingfeld, had, until a sale in 1951, a large collection probably assembled in the mid to late seventeenth century, ranging across classifications and intended for household use rather than a single collector.<sup>21</sup> Yet there is no evidence for the presence of a study or library room until a plan of 1774 naming a library. This room was on the ground floor corner of the entrance front and west range, which had other family rooms. The house was modernised from 1775, with the regrettable loss of the medieval great hall. It is unlikely that the 1774 room was the seventeenth century library. In turn, it has been superseded by the present library room, fitted out after 1830.<sup>22</sup> The material witness of the books points to the need for a book room before the eighteenth-century arrangement, and after the house was restored from the Civil War depredations it experienced. The man who repaired it, benefiting from a hard won baronetcy for his royalist loyalty but little else, died in

1684, leaving ‘the Madona [sic] in my closet’ to the Earl of Yarmouth (below).<sup>23</sup> A seventeenth-century closet could contain a library of books, but a house on the scale of Oxburgh could easily accommodate a separate study.

Oxnead Hall, Brampton, was the great Elizabeth home of the Pastons, later Earls of Yarmouth. The second largest house in Norfolk by the time of the 1664 Hearth Tax, it may be the county’s most romantic example of hubris followed by nemesis. By the time the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Yarmouth died without sons and massively in debt, the celebrated treasures of the collections within the house had already begun to be sold and the house would lie in ruins by 1744. The greatest days of the early modern Pastons were in the decades before the Civil War, when Oxnead was lived in by William Paston, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet, (d. 1663) and his wife Lady Katherine Bertie (d. 1637). William was an early virtuoso, collecting everything rare and curious, and travelling beyond the usual Grand Tour routes into Egypt and Jerusalem. His cousin summed up the collections: ‘I might spend another week and not see all the rarities.’<sup>24</sup> As a patron, he was noted for being ‘a great receiver of dedications’ particularly during his Commonwealth exile.<sup>25</sup> His son and heir Robert (1631-1683) was one of the first Fellows of the newly founded Royal Society, known for his interest in alchemy; he also hosted Charles II on the royal visit to Norfolk in 1671.<sup>26</sup> Created Earl of Yarmouth in 1679, he was heavily mortgaged and his son and heir William, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl, maintained the family spending habits. The Yarmouth library collection is recorded in the great sale of 1734, of 1,513 lots, usually of one title each.<sup>27</sup> If multiple volumes are allowed for, this might mean up to 4,500 volumes requiring to be housed. The principal modern historian of the Pastons, R.W. Ketton-Cremer, was unable to give any examples of surviving Oxnead printed books.

The ill-luck of the Pastons at Oxnead extended to the two surviving daughters of the family. Lady Rebecca married Sir John Holland of Quidenham in 1698 but their son William, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet, died without a male heir in 1729. The Holland books from the substantial

Jacobean house (surviving but much altered) were sold off: 1,591 titles (so a very similar scale to the Oxnead collection), mostly from the second half of the seventeenth century, including printed library catalogues.<sup>28</sup> In the absence of archives for the house, the location of the presumed library room is unknown.

The final house in this group of seventeenth-century collections is Hockwold Hall, home to Sir Cyril Wyche's collection, after his retirement from London law in the 1670s. This collection is known because it was sold by auction in 1710. The books are dated from the sixteenth century to the 1690s. The sale catalogue of *Bibliotheca Wichianii* was compiled from Sir Cyril's own manuscript catalogue of his books, with shelfmarks 'the whole appearing exactly as they stood in the library'. It is therefore possible to link the scale of the collection with the shelving required, for an estimated 2,400 titles housed in eleven cases of twelve shelves each and three cases of one, two and three shelves respectively (B, O and P). Shelf B was the last to be added, for an overflow of fourteen titles dated after 1699. This outline record of the disposition of cases around a large room provides the best view within this group of a lost library environment.

### **Lost books and lost rooms**

There are a few other Norfolk country houses that must have held a reasonable collection of books by 1700; in the absence of evidence the presumption must be on the side of book ownership, and four are suggested in Table 1. Commissioning a bookplate suggests multiples of books to justify the expense of a personalised copperplate engraving. For example, Martin Folkes (1640-1705) (father of Sir Martin Folkes, President of the Society of Antiquaries), was a wealthy lawyer who married Dorothy Hovell of Hillington Hall, co-heir of her father. Hillington Hall became the Folkes estate and Folkes senior died in possession of a bookplate but that is all that is known about the Hillington books before the later eighteenth century;

Dorothy's male forebears were scholars at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and should have been readers at Hillington. Other eighteenth-century libraries lack a prehistory: the Catholic Jerningham family, courtiers to Mary I, arrived at Costessey Hall in 1555 and rebuilt it in 1564. Eighteenth-century accounts show the family to be regular purchasers of books, and Sir George Jerningham (1680-1774) commissioned a book plate, but nothing is known of earlier ownership. Right at the end of the period under discussion, the Wodehouses of Kimberley rebuilt their house in c. 1700. Prior to that, the seventeenth century baronets earned a reputation for gentlemanly accomplishments, hailed by Thomas Peacham 'as not only learned but accomplished in what ever may lend lustre to worth and true Gentilitie'. Sir Philip Wodehouse wrote of his father, 'His home-delights were musiq and a book': Sir Philip had inherited his father's manuscript music collection and would go on to name music books as heirlooms in his own will.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, the great friend and advisor on virtuoso matters to Viscount Townshend and the Earl of Leicester, Sir Andrew Fountaine (1676-1753), added a large library room by 1718 to his father's house, Narford Hall, constructed c.1702. Andrew Fountaine senior had made a Grand Tour with John Coke of Holkham, but there is currently no evidence for a preceding study or book collection, in the absence of provenance research on the surviving books.

On their own, these few examples are fragmentary hints, but taken with the previous examples of known collections, all of these families need to be understood as members of a county network, who intermarried, travelled on Grand Tours together and acted as trustees and executors for the children of their neighbours. The families who can be positioned within two of the three chronologies, for houses and for collections, can be joined by the families who can be represented in all three chronologies: build dates, book collections and the elusive pre-1700 library room evidence. These families, and there are eight of them (Table 1: living at Hunstanton, Felbrigg, Ryston, Heydon, Stow Bardolph, Blickling, Melton Constable and

Rougham Halls), point towards emerging patterns in gentry provision for book rooms within their houses.<sup>30</sup> *In toto*, all of these families suggest a great undercurrent of ownership and ‘care of books.’ The differential survival of early modern books and their rooms is primarily a problem of evidence for the modern historian, and not a guide to the realities of intensive household use of books in the daily life of a country house during the seventeenth century.

### **An interdisciplinary approach to the pre-1700 library**

The shared project of reconstituting the intellectual culture of the early modern country house unifies many of the overarching questions, and source categories, across these chapters, but it also encourages reflection on where the evidence is found and how it is treated, methodologically and philosophically. The present chapter is the product of a diametrically opposite training to the text-based disciplines, rather, it originates from the material culture methods and philosophies of archaeology and architectural history, and is written from within a university department of art history. It takes the book as an object, and treats the book room as social space: both objects and spaces are cultural projects subject to human interventions observed across cultures by anthropologists, as material manifestations of the ideational structures of daily life. This approach meets text-based disciplines within the field of the history of the book.<sup>31</sup>

The history of the book, framed as a total approach to the social, economic, and cultural production and impact of the written word, was drawn together by the pioneering French historians Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin.<sup>32</sup> Their work emerged from over a century of European scholarship on the material conditions of production, circulation and to a more limited extent, consumption of the word, both in print and in manuscript form. The sea change was for greater attention to the social uses of books and for much of the evidence to be gathered from the material traces of books that have been repeatedly read, annotated, sold

and repurchased. The total approach contrasted with specialist literary fields of textual analysis, concerned with tracing the relationship of texts (words as signs) rather than the relationship of objects (words as material marks). The former has been noted as the Anglo-American tradition, paying close attention to what has been published and to edition histories, but reluctant to investigate the wider contexts.<sup>33</sup>

Decades on from the first publication of *L'Apparition du Livre* in 1958, the social life of books underpins research projects of great breadth, in national 'histories of the book' as well as a steady flow of case studies of individual readers and digitised archives, notably the online resource Early English Books Online.<sup>34</sup> The consequence of a call for a total history approach to the written word have been noted as running to a potential for 'interdisciplinarity run riot'; in practice, divisions between work on book trades, reading and writing remain distinctive.<sup>35</sup> The preceding chapter represents the fruit of research that does take up the challenge of investigating how prospective readers interacted with the book trade; some country house owners interacted with riotous enthusiasm, even before the historical high point of bibliomania. Interdisciplinary rioting has, perhaps thanks to the contributions of the many research-active librarians in the book history community, been hushed in tone.

Interdisciplinarity is often a *de facto* series of practices for higher research in the humanities, although academic allegiances are usually expressed by traditional disciplines. Book historians tend to emerge from English departments to follow the infiltration of texts into social life, both historic and contemporary. More recent decades have produced cross-fertilisations, between literary historians who engage with political and wider cultural history (after the New Historicism), and social historians who take up the challenge of integrating visual and material sources into historical narrative. The 'material turn', as the latter shift has been called, has quite reasonably tended to produce research on aspects of undocumented lives of the urban middling and lower socio-economic classes.<sup>36</sup> The English country house

as a field of material culture has remained largely the remit for the disciplines founded on an engagement with the aesthetic, namely art and architectural history.

An immediate challenge to this equation of the country house with aesthetics comes from the increasing amount of work produced by book historians investigating country house libraries, created from generations of their owners' interaction with the book trades discussed in the previous chapter. This work has been led in England by the National Trust's willingness to recognise the historical specificity of each of the libraries in the houses it holds in trust.<sup>37</sup> The scale of their surviving private library holdings has been until recently the dominant obstacle in producing the base-line bibliographical research (cataloguing as a term denies the complexity of bibliographic identification and description required for historic books) necessary for in-depth understanding of the process of acquisition, accumulation and use. New research is emerging; the present book is sustained by exactly this commitment to relating collections to their past readers, and to wider spatial and visual identities.

### **The absence of pre-1700 library rooms**

The impact on the senses of a well-furnished country house is inevitable, thanks to the rich layering of visual and material textures and the iconographic and metatextual allusions available to the viewer, discussed throughout this book. Out of this richness, each of the present authors probably enters a historic house with a different research question in mind. Mine is invariably 'where was the first library?'. Not, 'where is the library?', enjoyable though a surviving room full of books may be, but to ask what came before that room, making a private bet with the guidebook that the first library is either a 'known unknown' or not discussed. The pace of architectural remodelling or change of interior schemes is usually such that the nineteenth-century presentation of the library room bears little relation to the room for books used by seventeenth-century or earlier owners.



One of the earliest surviving library rooms in England, albeit one that lacks any fittings, is at Stoke Bruerne, Northamptonshire. Sir Francis Crane (1579-1636) commissioned a house, attributed to the first architect of the Palladian revival in England, Inigo Jones. The house, now gone, has two surviving pavilions attached to it by passages, one for the library and one for the chapel.<sup>38</sup> This is the library as architectural statement, something of a contrast with the other survivors. For the period up to 1700, it is the Duke of Lauderdale's tiny wood-lined book room in Ham House, Surrey, set up in 1674 and accessed from the upper floor gallery, that is inevitably held up as the sole survivor of its time.<sup>39</sup> Other surviving aristocratic library rooms include the attic library of Thomas Ken, bishop of Bath and Wells (1637-1711), at Longleat. Sir Thomas Thynne, Viscount Weymouth, was the patron of Bishop Ken, who lived in the house after 1691 and who left his personal library there (housed in the attic storey). The ducal palace of Petworth, Sussex, displays a nineteenth-century library room on the ground floor, a location unknown to the Proud Duke who remodelled the house in the 1680s and whose Old Library survives over the medieval chapel. A surviving but little known (in private ownership) gentry library at Denham Place, Buckinghamshire, was fitted out in the 1690s. It is large enough to be lit by two windows, and is beautifully panelled so that bookshelves and decorative panelling are completely integrated. It is on the ground floor looking out from the original entrance façade.

The research problem, then, is not about whether there were book collections in early modern country houses (although there are pockets of empirical resistance to this collective conclusion) but there are still questions about the nature of these collections, their expected readers and how far the accumulation of library collections went down the stratified layers of the landed classes. How much would a country house owner wish to invest not only in books but in the 'care of books' within the house? Henry Peacham warned his early seventeenth-century readers of the dangers of displaying books without internalising the knowledge they

contained: 'to be stored with bookes, and have well furnished Libraries, yet keep their heads empty of knowledge.'<sup>40</sup> Peacham seems to be drawing attention both to the practice of keeping numbers of books and of displaying them in library rooms. In the general absence of pre-1700 book rooms that can be visited, the library collections that have been examined have inevitably been discussed without a sense of the space that housed them. The few extant rooms make it extremely difficult to relate collections back convincingly to any detailed conclusions about their surroundings. This absence of a sense of the material environment matters if the 'material turn' is to make a difference to a historically situated understanding of the conditions of early modern lives. Collections need physical contexts, as well as intellectual arenas. An anthropologically informed approach suggests that objects and spaces act back on the viewer or user; shaped by human actors, the inanimate world acquires some animation in producing effects back on its creators.

Rooms are not just spaces for display, but environments that guide and prompt behaviours, or sometimes provoke dissenting actions such as iconoclasm. The occasional discovery of a tiny book secreted behind panelling or under floorboards may represent dissent from the household order of properly housed and diligently studied books. Samuel Pepys exerted his influence over disorderly books. While reordering his books he felt dissatisfied by the visual disorder resulting from slight variations in height; he corrected this by inserting wooden blocks to remedy the departure from the ideal. He commissioned portable book cases to his own design to hold his collection and selected portraits of friends to hang above them. Pepys created a very specific combination of visual and material elements to produce his own sense of order; exceptionally, books, cases, drawings of the interior scheme and Pepys' own written account of his activities survive.<sup>41</sup> It seems fair to assume that the finished scheme continued to 'give' pleasure back to Pepys each time he contemplated what he had achieved: 'giving' used here in the sense that objects can have agency.

What we know about Pepy's last library room is exceptional, and it is unclear how representative it is as the product of a metropolitan lifestyle. If he initiated a distinctive style for free-standing bookcases, there is little evidence for their adoption beyond survivors at Dyrham Park, Gloucestershire. For the lost country houses, replaced by their wealthy owners or demolished by their impoverished heirs, rooms for books seem to leave few sources.

The 'three chronologies' proposed here for the relationship between the build date of the house, the evidence for books and the evidence for a book room will probably never be brought into alignment. However, clarifying the existence of these three threads of development should be useful for the disciplines who meet at the country house as a locus for intellectual history. Such a history is not disembodied, and the physical environment of the early modern country house remains a fruitful research area for questions about social practices as the expressions of interior lives.

## Endnotes

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1 G. Naudé, *Instructions concerning erecting of a library*, trans. J. Evelyn (London: G. Bedle, T. Collins, J. Crook, 1661), p. 14.

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