

# A man of 'unflagging zeal and industry': Sir George Scharf as an emerging professional within the nineteenth-century museum world

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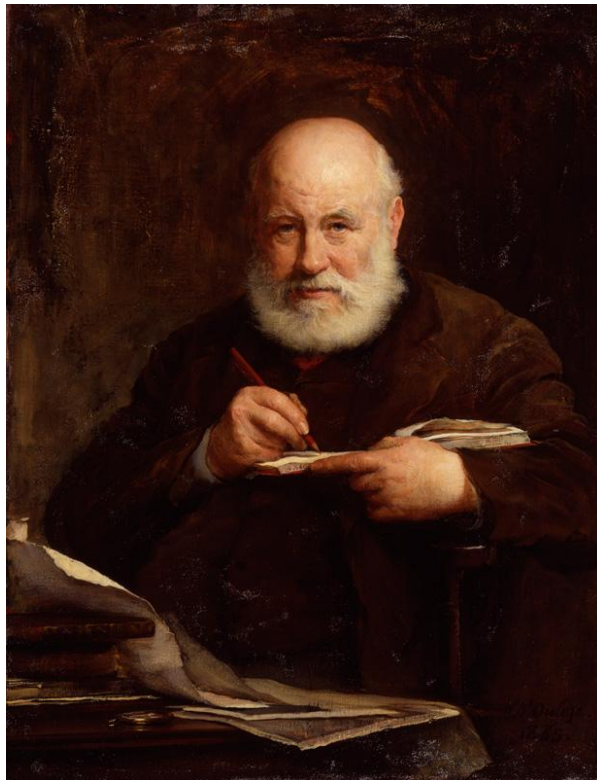


Figure 1: Sir George Scharf, by Walter William Oules, oil on canvas, 1885, NPG 985.  
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Sir George Scharf was appointed first secretary of the newly established National Portrait Gallery early in 1857, becoming director in 1882 and retiring shortly before his death, in 1895 (fig. 1). Applied by the Gallery's Board of Trustees when formally recording this event in their annual report, the phrase quoted in the title indicates the strength of Scharf's commitment to his duties over the course of a career that spanned five decades.<sup>1</sup> As custodian of the national portraits, Scharf's remit encompassed every aspect of Gallery activity. Whilst he held responsibility for the display, interpretation and conservation of the collection in its earliest days, he also

<sup>1</sup> Lionel Cust, 12 Sep. 1895, *NPG Report of the Trustees 1895*, 4, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

devoted a significant amount of time to research into the portraits.<sup>2</sup> To this end, Scharf oversaw the establishment of an on-site research library of engraved portraits, periodicals, books and documents. Coupled with his meticulous investigations into works in private and public collections across Britain, this served as a vital resource for authenticating potential portrait acquisitions. In recording what he saw by means of densely annotated sketches and tracings, Scharf developed a procedure for the documentation, identification and authentication of portraiture, which continues to inform the research practice of the Institution.

In this article I first scrutinize Scharf's attitude towards the execution of his official duties and argue that his unremitting efforts resulted in the creation of a set of professional standards, serving as a template for specialized research to be adopted and carried forward by his successors. In so doing, I consider Scharf's specific engagement with new developments in art historical scholarship as practised by contemporaries in Britain and Europe over his lifetime. That is, rather than summarizing Scharf's scholarly output or contribution to the canon of art history, I examine his implementation of a more rigorous, evidence-based approach to research, which underpinned the nascent discipline. Secondly, I contend that despite a singular dedication to his cause Scharf was not working in isolation. Instead, he benefitted from the immediate expertise and access offered through interrelated circles of contacts. I outline the extent of Scharf's social and professional networks and map the physical sites of communication with leading scholarly, artistic, and museum-world figures. I reflect upon the degree to which these connections ensured the success of his work for the National Portrait Gallery, whilst also investigating his own position of influence within this sphere. In conclusion I consider Scharf's role in the professionalization of art museum practice that gained momentum in the later 1800s, a period that saw the emergence of a range of clearly defined, independent, professions.<sup>3</sup> I further propose that a generous spirit of exchange and collaboration, which characterized interactions between Scharf and his colleagues, positioned these individuals collectively at the forefront of advancements in their scholarly and professional fields during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Scharf sketchbooks**

From the moment George Scharf assumed his duties at the National Portrait Gallery, in October 1857, the diligence and enthusiasm with which he pursued what

<sup>2</sup> On George Scharf's active interest in the conservation and restoration of collection objects, see Jacob Simon's article in this issue.

<sup>3</sup> On the development of a professional class in Britain during the 1800s, see Harold James Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780–1880*, London; Toronto: Routledge & Kegan Paul; University of Toronto Press, 1969; and Harold James Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, London; New York: Routledge, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> This article is based on material developed for two chapters of my PhD thesis: Elizabeth Heath, 'Sir George Scharf and the early National Portrait Gallery: reconstructing an intellectual and professional artistic world, 1857–1895', University of Sussex/National Portrait Gallery, 2018.

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was to be his life's work is notable. Though his curatorial reputation had been sealed by way of his endeavours in sourcing and hanging the 'Ancient Masters' at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of the same year, it was to the development of a collection of authentic British portraits representing the history of the nation that he focussed his energy for the rest of his career.<sup>5</sup> Essential to the acquisition of expertise in this field was Scharf's ongoing programme to document portraits pictorially, either those investigated by the Board at Trustees' meetings, or those held in private collections across the country. He filled over 50 Trustees' sketchbooks (TSBs) with closely annotated drawings of portraits brought to the Gallery for inspection or encountered during expeditions paid for by the government (fig. 2).<sup>6</sup> Between the dates of his tenure, he also included in his parallel series of personal sketchbooks (SSBs) invaluable information on British historical portraiture, gathered as part of a survey of country house collections undertaken at his own initiative and expense. Those compiled over his career number almost 100 and chart repeated visits largely to aristocratic homes, initially to study the artworks and then as a favoured family guest, as was the case at Knole House, Blenheim Palace and Longford Castle.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 2: George Scharf, sketch after a portrait offered as Queen Henrietta Maria in 1876, TSB 24, NPG7/1/3/1/2/22, p.41, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. © National Portrait Gallery, London

<sup>5</sup> Between his appointment 1857 and his retirement just a few weeks before the end of his life, Scharf oversaw the acquisition of 982 painted portraits, drawings, busts, miniatures and medals.

<sup>6</sup> This includes extensive research into portraits of British sitters in the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and Hampton Court; see TSBs NPG7/1/3/1/3/5-7 and 10-14, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Other targeted collections included 'University Colleges' and 'Corporation Halls'; see George Scharf to Philip Stanhope, 20 Jun. 1864 (printed copy), NPG20/2, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>7</sup> See NPG7/3/4/2/49-142, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Extended visits gave Scharf the opportunity to study these collections closely; his sketches are also interspersed with scenes of local landscape and incidents of family life. In addition, written notes on portraits in private collections functioned alongside his sketchbook drawings (see, for example, NPG7/1/3/3/1/7-14, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

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Temporary exhibitions bringing together privately owned works were similarly important sites for research. Scharf was involved in a number of external projects that directly fed back into his work for the National Portrait Gallery. He was, for example, on the organizing committee for the 1862 Special Loan Exhibition of works of the Medieval, Renaissance and later periods at the South Kensington Museum.<sup>8</sup> Writing to William Smith (the Deputy Chairman of Gallery Trustees), Scharf hoped to get ‘a little good time for seeing the South Kensington Exhibitions & making some serviceable notes’.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, his personal sketchbooks 63 and 65 are dotted with intricate studies of portrait miniatures, the loans of many of which he had helped to secure.<sup>10</sup> The three National Portraits Exhibitions staged by the South Kensington Museum between 1866 and 1868 also offered significant research opportunities. Having advised on the selection of exhibits, Scharf carved out subsequent time to study them and exclaimed in 1866: ‘Thank goodness the Portrait Exhibition is over! I have worked at it early & late and devoted every moment that I could beyond this Gallery work, and yet I could have well gone on six weeks longer!’<sup>11</sup> His eagerness to accumulate new portrait information remained unwavering; he made regular trips to historical exhibitions he had helped to organize at the New Gallery in Regent Street between 1889 and 1891, to sketch and make notes.<sup>12</sup> The annual Old Masters Exhibitions at the Royal Academy likewise provided ample potential. Scharf was a regular attendee of the private views and a repeat visitor to the exhibitions during their run. He is included in Henry Jamyn Brooks’s large group portrait, *Private View of the Old Masters Exhibition, Royal Academy, 1888* [NPG 1833]. A composite scene depicting key figures associated with the late Victorian art world, Scharf is shown standing in characteristic pose with sketchbook open, absorbed in the act of note taking.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> This was intended as a counterpoint to the displays of modern manufactures in the 1862 International Exhibition, on the other side of Exhibition Road.

<sup>9</sup> George Scharf to William Smith, 15 Aug. 1862, NPG20/3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. For Scharf’s contribution to the exhibition see also NPG7/2/8, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, SSB 63, NPG7/3/4/2/74, 25, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. The 1862 loan exhibition was closely associated with the activities of the Fine Arts Club (to which Scharf belonged before 1874) and many of its members served on the exhibition committee; see Ann Eatwell, ‘The Collector’s or Fine Arts Club 1857–1874. The first society for Collectors of the Decorative Arts’, *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1850-Present*, 18, 1994, 28–9.

<sup>11</sup> George Scharf to William Smith, 20 Aug. 1866, NPG20/3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. On the National Portraits Exhibitions see SSB 78–80, NPG7/3/4/2/89–91; and NPG7/2/4, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>12</sup> These were exhibitions of the royal houses of Stuart, Tudor and Guelph respectively; see, for example, SSBs 118 and 120, NPG7/3/4/2/133 and 135, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. The Grosvenor Gallery Winter exhibitions were similarly useful, especially those on Reynolds (1884) and Van Dyke (1887).

<sup>13</sup> For more information on this portrait, see Elizabeth Heath, *Later Victorian Portraits Catalogue*, entry NPG 1833; <

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitExtended/mw00049/Private-View-of-the-Old-Masters-Exhibition-Royal-Academy-1888>>, accessed 20 Sep. 2017.



Figure 3: George Scharf, sketch after a portrait of Horace Vere, Baron Vere of Tilbury [NPG 818], 1889, TSB 24, NPG7/1/3/1/2/31, p.31, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. © National Portrait Gallery, London

The motivation for Scharf's documentary project likely stemmed from his background as an artist and an antiquarian.<sup>14</sup> The detailed studies (fig. 3) attest to his skill as a draughtsman which, alongside a natural impulse to record what he saw, was fostered at an early age when accompanying his father - the artist and lithographer George Johann Scharf - on drawing expeditions around London and honed via formal training at the Royal Academy Schools (1838). Scharf's early employment as an illustrator of artistic and archaeological texts surely consolidated his practice of close observation, of carefully delineating each element of his subject.<sup>15</sup> An active Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries from 1852, his interpretation of portraits as historical documents is everywhere evident. Beyond Scharf's interest in documenting a sitter's facial features and pose, he also sought to emphasize identifying characteristics such as costume, inscriptions, jewellery, insignia and heraldic devices. Indeed, Scharf's drawings bear the hallmarks of antiquarian illustration. Over and above attempts at mimesis, their central function is to record as much information about an object as possible. Often he would

<sup>14</sup> Marcia Pointon compares Scharf to the graphic antiquarian George Vertue (1683–1756), renowned for his engraved heads after original portraits: 'What Vertue had begun as an obsessional private activity (though he came to earn his living by it), Scharf completed as a civil servant'; see Marcia Rachel Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, 227.

<sup>15</sup> An outstanding example from this period of his life is the English edition of Franz Kugler's *Handbook of Italian Painting*, edited and translated by Sir Charles and Lady Elizabeth Eastlake. In Scharf's copy of the handbook are preserved letters from Charles Eastlake, in which he discusses further pictures to illustrate and praises the care and accuracy Scharf had bestowed; see Charles Lock Eastlake ed., *The schools of painting in Italy, translated, from the German of Kugler by a lady, edited, with notes, by Sir, Charles L. Eastlake, P.R.A., F.R.S*, 2 vols, London: John Murray, 1851 [annotated with correspondence bound in], Scharf Library, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

enlarge sections of interest or magnify details adjacent to the central image: signatures, intricacies of clothing and coats of arms. These sketches, especially those executed directly in the service of the Trustees, are rational investigations into the likenesses they document and were intended as useful and accessible reference material.

Together, Scharf's sketchbooks constitute a central resource to which he returned continuously to revise and enhance, and against which he would evaluate and authenticate potential acquisitions for the Gallery.<sup>16</sup> The two series formed the core of his eventual bequest to the National Portrait Gallery, which also included a range of key publications from his own collection, heavily annotated and augmented, and containing written cross-references to the sketchbook drawings.<sup>17</sup> An extract from Scharf's will transcribed in the Trustees' minutes specifies that the public and private sketchbooks were to be kept together. This material, alongside other notebooks, annotated auction and exhibition catalogues, tracings and indexes, was to form part of the Gallery's wider library but was to be 'retained therein distinct and apart in a separate case or cases for the purpose of more convenient reference thereto'.<sup>18</sup> In so stipulating, Scharf underlined his intention to secure for future portraiture research this framework of go-to resources, which he had so carefully accumulated and shaped over the course of his career. There are other indicators that towards the end of his life, Scharf was thinking about his professional legacy. On 7 February 1890, he wrote in his diary: 'making references to my SB [sketchbooks] in Tudor catalogue...Indexing my SB volumes that I had neglected since SB 116'.<sup>19</sup> Three indexes to the sketchbooks, compiled in the 1890s, are preserved amongst the Scharf papers. Two list the contents of each volume, whilst a third is ordered by both subject and location; here he has carefully cross-referenced the relevant sketchbook pages across both series.<sup>20</sup>

Further items highlight Scharf's concern, above facilitating access to his own reference material, with putting in place a system for the continuation of his methodical approach to portrait research. This is evidenced in his 1894 design for a 'tabulated form' for use at the Gallery to record identifying details of pictures submitted for inspection. His suggested descriptive categories promote a standardized and consistent method for documenting portraits and include: 'artist,

<sup>16</sup> Portraits in the Trustees' sketchbooks are accompanied by the number of the Trustees' meeting at which they were considered, and the specific offer number for the picture as recorded in the Register of Offers: NPG85/2/1-10, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>17</sup> For example: Ralph Nicholson Wornum, *Some account of the life and works of Hans Holbein, painter, of Augsburg*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1867 [annotated with both bound and loosely laid in notes, correspondence and press cuttings], Scharf Library, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG; and *Catalogue of the art treasures of the United Kingdom collected at Manchester in 1857*, 3 vols, London: Bradbury & Evans, 1857 [annotated with notes pasted in], Scharf Library, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>18</sup> See minutes of the 210th meeting of the Board of Trustees, 9 May 1895, NPG 1/5, 174, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. This remains the case, although what is known as the Scharf Library and the Scharf Archive form two discrete categories of NPG holdings today.

<sup>19</sup> George Scharf, personal diary, NPG7/3/1/47, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>20</sup> See Indexes to sketchbooks, NPG7/1/3/1/1/1-3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

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signature and date on picture, with any other inscriptions or monograms' and 'Whether full face, profile or seen in three quarters...Colour of eyes and hair'.<sup>21</sup> It is probable that this design formed the basis of a printed form that from 1897 was bound and used to record details of portraits examined by the Board. Ordered by Trustee meeting and largely including a photograph of the picture in question, these forms were implemented by Scharf's successor Lionel Cust and effectively replaced the Trustees' sketchbooks as an official record sequence.<sup>22</sup> If this scheme appropriated the principles of the Trustees' sketchbooks, then a related project unquestionably built upon Scharf's efforts likewise to codify portrait collections nation-wide in his personal sketchbooks. First proposed in 1862 but only finally implemented by Scharf in 1893, the National Survey of Portraits - in actuality overseen by Cust from 1898 - was designed to register details of family pictures in lesser-known repositories: 'Such palatial mansions of the Nobility as Wilton, Longford, Bowood, Longleat and Corsham are sufficiently well known and their contents have long been systematically recorded. But it is in the quiet smaller ministerial and family residences, collegiate institutions & endowed schools and municipal buildings that further treasures are to be looked for'.<sup>23</sup> Intended as a co-operative endeavour, Scharf drafted comprehensive Survey Return forms to be populated by regional experts and enthusiasts and bound together as a national catalogue of portraits. In so doing he articulated his own methodology for documenting portraiture, arranging the required categories of information in order of relative importance, and proffering the fruits of his long experience making sketches and notes in the field.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> George Scharf, 'Tabulated descriptive form of Portraits for Registration', Jan. 1894, NPG7/1/3/3/4/5, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Scharf's headings encouraged the inclusion of particular details, e.g. 'Costume: main colour of dress, covering to neck, ruff, cravat or beard. Head-dress, chains or orders, stars, necklace, earrings, jewellery'.

<sup>22</sup> 'Description of Portraits submitted for inspection', 1897-1927, NPG87, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. It is likely that Scharf's original idea for a descriptive form did not include images. In some written notes under the title 'Suggestions for a Systematic method of Describing Portraits', he explains the importance of written descriptions: 'A Catalogue of Portraits, to be permanently useful, should contain not only a biographical account of each person represented, but a pictorial description of each painting so worded as not merely to assist the memory but even excite the imagination of those who have never seen the picture' (8 Aug. 1893, NPG8/2/1, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

<sup>23</sup> George Scharf (memo), Apr. 1893, NPG8/2/1, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. My thanks to NPG Senior Archive and Library Manager Bryony Millan for drawing my attention to this material and providing access to her work on the National Survey of Portraits (Mar. 2015). The idea for a national catalogue of portraits was first suggested in a letter of 1862 from the politician and author Sir George Cornwall Lewis to Lord Stanhope, the Chairman of Gallery Trustees. In his draft reply to Stanhope dated 30 Apr. 1862, Scharf declares his enthusiasm for the plan and points out: '[F]or a long while I have been collecting notes and records with a similar object' (see NPG8/2/1, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

<sup>24</sup> In the final printed version, the form is identical to those employed to record information about portraits sent to the NPG for inspection; see NPG87, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. In the end the project remained uncompleted; the Gallery compiled just a small sequence of



### The question of authenticity

The historical significance of a portrait's subject governed the National Portrait Gallery's early acquisition policy, over and above concern with its artistic merit. Andrea Geddes Poole notes that members of the Gallery's Board of Trustees were selected for their capacity to determine an individual's ranking within the history of the nation. Appointments were made by the Treasury not on the basis of connoisseurial skills or aristocratic titles, but according to a candidate's knowledge of 'history, public affairs, letters and science'.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the sourcing of genuine likenesses of celebrated figures was a central preoccupation and a mandate that Scharf took seriously from the outset. Geddes Poole proposes that in contrast to the National Gallery, where the director was the expert, professional expertise at the National Portrait Gallery lay instead with the Trustees.<sup>26</sup> However, I assert that whilst Board members largely directed their energies towards assessing the importance of the sitter in a portrait, Scharf's particular expertise lay in his ability to establish its authenticity. This was a skill upon which the Trustees would become increasingly dependent and in this regard, Scharf's professional opinion carried weight, despite the fact that he wielded no executive power when it came to accepting or rejecting a work.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, beyond transcribing the physiognomies of historical characters, portraits in the collection were to function as a set of 'visual primary sources'.<sup>28</sup> In discussing Thomas Carlyle's advocacy for a national portrait gallery of genuine likenesses, Paul Barlow explores Carlyle's belief that authentic portraiture could serve as a means to link the past and present, arguing that this concern rested on the contemporary understanding that an image taken from life held the potential to position the onlooker metaphorically face to face with its subject: 'the suggestion that the viewer could in imagination stand in

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bound surveys of portraits in external collections (see NPG16 (1898–1919), Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

<sup>25</sup> Andrea Geddes Poole, *Stewards of the Nation's Art: Contested Cultural Authority, 1890-1939*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010, 30–3. Geddes Poole does concede that art experts (including portraitists John Everett Millais and George Frederic Watts) also served on the Board. From the 1880s the second Chairman Charles Stewart Hardinge actively promoted more selectivity with regards to the artistic calibre of acquisitions.

<sup>26</sup> See Geddes Poole, *Stewards of the Nation's Art*, 76.

<sup>27</sup> Lara Perry asserts that Scharf's duties centred almost entirely on developing the expertise required to identify and authenticate portraits 'and to prevent errors in their identification on behalf of the Gallery and the wider world'; see Lara Perry, 'Looking like a Woman: Gender and Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century National Portrait Gallery', in David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry eds, *English Art, 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001, 120.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Barlow, 'Facing the Past and Present: The NPG and the Search for 'Authentic' Portraiture', in Joanna Woodall ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997, 221.



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the place of the original artist as he had once looked at the sitter, and so travel back in time to the moment when the sitter lived'.<sup>29</sup>

With the application of this key criterion, the collection necessarily grew in an irregular fashion. Indeed, Barlow notes that the Trustees' very insistence on authenticity prevented them from building a collection with a core of carefully chosen images. Instead, they 'had to pick up portraits as they became available, making decisions on an ad hoc basis'.<sup>30</sup> Accessions were thus made as and when suitable portraits were presented for donation or when opportunities arose on the art market (and providing sufficient purchase funds were obtainable), and in both instances pictures were thoroughly and cautiously vetted.<sup>31</sup> In a lecture given at the Royal Institution in 1866, Scharf maintained: 'Unless implicit reliance can be placed on the authenticity of the likeness, a portrait becomes worthless. The soundness of claims to genuineness may be tested and authenticated in various ways; but especially by reference to pictures preserved in family mansions, historical descriptions, and by comparison to contemporary engravings of the best class.'<sup>32</sup> As early as 1860 Scharf was able to draw on information compiled in his sketchbooks for this purpose; his drawings are frequently accompanied by descriptions of eye colour, hair colour and skin tone, and are intended as a practical template for comparison with alternative proposed likenesses of a sitter. Writing to William Smith against the acquisition of a portrait of the essayist and poet Joseph Addison on sale with the picture dealer Henry Farrer, he surely made reference to his notes in order to recollect this level of detail, despite his extraordinary memory:

<sup>29</sup> Barlow, 'Facing the Past and Present', 221. Julian North similarly explores Carlyle's argument that in revealing to the onlooker the authentic face and figure, 'the portraitist could bring the sitter back to him as incarnated spirit' (see Julian North, 'Portraying Presence: Thomas Carlyle, Portraiture, and Biography', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 43: 3, Sep. 2015, 467), whilst Eileen Hooper-Greenhill discusses the contemporary idea of a 'tangible link' between viewer and individualized past, created through the medium of the authentic portrait (see Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, London; New York: Routledge, 2000, 39). See also Deborah Stein's article in this issue, on the value ascribed by nineteenth-century museum administrators to artworks, which were considered metaphorical 'windows into history'.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Barlow, 'The Imagined Hero as Incarnate Sign: Thomas Carlyle and the Mythology of the 'National Portrait' in Victorian Britain', *Art History*, 17: 4, 1 Dec. 1994, 520–1.

<sup>31</sup> In reality the Trustees also accepted portraits contemporary with a sitter's lifetime, in lieu of a known or available pictures from life. Artist's replicas were also acquired for this reason, although later copies after portraits were actively excluded. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill accounts for the presence of non-originals in the early collection as symptomatic of the Trustees' desire for representativeness; see Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 40.

<sup>32</sup> George Scharf, *Weekly evening meeting, Friday, March 2, 1866: on portraiture: its fallacies and curiosities as connected with English history* [transcript of Royal Institution lecture], London: Royal Institution of Great Britain, 1866, 2, copy Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. The choice of this location for Scharf's lecture speaks of the clear parallels drawn between scientific and art historical research, during this period.



Figure 4: George Scharf, sketch after a portrait of Joseph Addison in the style of Godfrey Kneller, 1859, TSB 3, NPG7/1/3/1/2/3, p.24, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. © National Portrait Gallery, London

The portraits I remember are the Kit-Cat, Lord Northwick's, the Bodleian, Queens College Oxford and the one by Jervas at Knole...In no case among the Addison portraits named above is the nose so thin or so verging upon the aquiline as in the Farrer picture...The colour of the eyeballs in the Queen's College picture is blue grey. In the Farrer picture it is brown-grey, if not decidedly brown. The colour of the eyebrows accords but the space of the flesh between the eyebrow and the eyelid is very different.<sup>33</sup> (fig. 4)

In this case, Scharf's detailed comparison with other known portraits of Addison directly informed the Trustees' decision not to purchase the picture.<sup>34</sup> Although not always foolproof in eliciting a genuine likeness, the results of this and other procedures were of fundamental service to the Board in the allocation of their annual purchase grant towards the acquisition of pictures for the national collection.<sup>35</sup> Regardless of the outcome, the documentation of recognized portraits referenced in the course of authenticating pictures offered to the Gallery, held lasting value. Scharf acknowledged the importance of this process: 'In many of these instances, whilst the pictures offered were declined as spurious, the Collection

<sup>33</sup> George Scharf to William Smith, 21 Dec. 1860, NPG20/3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>34</sup> Despite valuing the Addison portrait 'on art grounds alone', Scharf concedes that because of these inconsistencies, the purchase of Farrer's picture would possibly leave the Gallery open to criticism: 'what I express privately other individuals with no friendly feeling may utter publically'; see George Scharf to William Smith, 21 Dec. 1860, NPG20/3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. The portrait is listed in the Register of Offers as by 'Kneller', but it is the likeness, not the artist attribution, that is queried in this instance (see 20 Dec. 1860, XLIII 5, NPG85/2/1, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

<sup>35</sup> This remained small, the yearly parliamentary provision not increasing during Scharf's tenure beyond £2,000 (to cover acquisitions, wages and other Gallery costs), whereas the National Gallery's purchase grant alone fluctuated between £5,000 and £10,000; see Geddes Poole, *Stewards of the Nation's Art*, 64.

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of the Trustees became enriched by tracings and careful records of the most genuine and authentic portraits known to exist'.<sup>36</sup>

The examination of related drawings and engravings was similarly an important element in this verification process. A picture suspected as a copy could be tested against a known print after the original, whilst the quality of a likeness could be established by means of comparison with engravings after other portraits contemporary with a sitter's lifetime. Information attained through the study of preparatory drawings or engraved reproductions could also confirm or discredit artist attributions and therefore impinge upon the deliberations of the Board. In the early years of his career, Scharf was materially assisted in this task by founding Trustees William Smith, an acknowledged expert in historical portrait engravings, and William Hookham Carpenter, keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum. Trips to the Museum's print room and library to trace or make sketches for this purpose became his default course of action, as his personal diaries relate.<sup>37</sup> As techniques for photographically reproducing oil paintings and other art works improved, Scharf increasingly used photographs to assist his portraiture research. He recognized the value of photography at an early date in its development. Commenting in 1858 on its potential to reproduce works of art in the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, he regrets the technical limitations of transferring coloured originals into black and white, but admits that 'whenever the original *does* clearly reveal itself the rendering is fact indeed'.<sup>38</sup> Photographs of portraits can be found throughout Scharf's papers, inserted into sketchbooks, included amongst correspondence or bound into exhibition catalogues and other volumes in his library. It is interesting to note the presence of photographic proofs in some of his sketchbooks from the early 1860s, pasted in directly opposite his corresponding sketch of the same portrait. At this stage photographs were supplements to, rather than replacements for, Scharf's annotated drawings. Beyond the obvious advantages of copious colour notes, the latter could still offer clearer and more abundant information on details of form and composition.<sup>39</sup> By the 1880s however, he was confident enough to utilize photographic images as a direct method of comparison between portraits. This was occasionally undertaken in situ, when he would bring along photographs to contrast against pictures hanging on the walls of an exhibition or auction house. It was useful, for example, for his ongoing research

<sup>36</sup> George Scharf to Philip Stanhope, 20 Jun. 1864 (printed copy), NPG20/2, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. In this letter Lord Stanhope, the first Chairman of Gallery Trustees, he concedes that his records of all portraits offered to the Trustees were also useful as a 'means of checking dealers and others from palming off the same picture more than once on the notice of the Board'.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, George Scharf, personal diary, 3 Oct. 1859, NPG7/3/1/16, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG; and 13 Jan. 1883 (NPG7/3/1/40, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

<sup>38</sup> As quoted by Elizabeth Pergam, who also examines the difficulties of photographing works of art at this early stage in the development of the practice; see Elizabeth Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857: Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs and the Public*, Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011, 124 and 119–26. These namely concerned the inability to efficiently translate the tonal modulations of oil paintings.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, SSB 55a, NPG7/3/4/2/66, 58, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

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into authentic portraits of Mary Queen of Scots. When visiting the exhibition staged for her 1887 tercentenary in Peterborough, Scharf noted in his diary for 14 September: '[t]ook my opera glasses & the newly bought photograph of the Windsor Mary Queen of Scots to compare with the Blair[s] one'.<sup>40</sup>

Scharf's methodical approach to research, whereby authenticity was established on a case-by-case basis through painstaking comparison with other known portraits of a sitter, aligns him closely with those principles of art historical scholarship pioneered by German academics in the middle of the nineteenth century. Frank Herrmann notes that the critical examination of painting was given a substantial push forward in Britain by the visits of Johann David Passavant and Gustav Waagen, the latter establishing a technique for the scientific analysis of a picture in relation to the rest of an artist's oeuvre that was advanced greatly by Sir Charles Eastlake at the National Gallery and other museum officials.<sup>41</sup> Scharf's lasting friendships with these men and other European academics, including scholar and curator Wilhelm von Bode and the classical art historian Adolf Michaelis, would have ensured a continued awareness of developments in continental scholarship.<sup>42</sup> James Sheehan identifies the second half of the 1800s as the point at which art history in Germany acquired its disciplinary character, when scholars began in earnest to assemble information about artists, catalogue their work and develop 'a methodology for settling problems of attribution'.<sup>43</sup> In post at the National Portrait Gallery, Scharf tailored his own scientific impulse to the Gallery's founding acquisition policy, thus directing the majority of his time and expertise towards the validation of likenesses over the verification of artist attributions.<sup>44</sup>

Sheehan pinpoints an 'elective affinity between art history and the museum' in Germany, with many of the first art historians also being museum staff.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> George Scharf, personal diary, 14 Sep. 1887, NPG7/3/1/44, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. In the 1880s, Scharf also made sketches after photographs as he would from an engraving; see for example SSB 114, NPG7/3/4/2/129, 15 and 18, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>41</sup> Frank Herrmann, *The English as Collectors; a Documentary Chrestomathy*, New York: Norton, 1972, 34. On the early collaboration between Passavant and Eastlake, see Susanna Avery-Quash and Corina Meyer's article in this issue.

<sup>42</sup> Michaelis stayed with Scharf at his home at Ashley Place for an extended period four times between 1861 and 1883, whilst undertaking research in England. The two men kept up correspondence until the end of Scharf's life; see NPG7/3/1/18 and 30 and NPG7/3/5/1/5, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Names of German academics that also reoccur in Scharf's diaries, correspondence and papers include: Theodor Panofka, Carl Justi, Hugo von Tschudi, Alfred Woltmann and Karl Woermann. Scharf's library contains bound presentation essays inscribed by these individuals and others, such as Otto Jahn and Alexander Conze.

<sup>43</sup> James Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World from the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 89.

<sup>44</sup> This policy privileged the sitter over the artist: 'Artistic merit is no test for admission of a portrait into the National Portrait Gallery. What is required is that it should be authentic, and that it gives a fair representation, as far as can be ascertained, of the features of the original'; Anon., 'The National Portrait Gallery', *The Quarterly Review*, Apr. 1888, 358.

<sup>45</sup> Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World*, 90.

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Certainly in Britain, art museums long functioned as central sites for the formation of a discipline that did not achieve institutional legitimacy until the twentieth century.<sup>46</sup> During the later Victorian period a 'systematic turn' can be identified which, according to Christopher Whitehead, can be linked to the growing professionalization of curators who sought to distinguish themselves from their 'amateur' or 'dilettante' predecessors.<sup>47</sup> Whitehead further contends that the claim to rigorousness by nineteenth-century museum officials was reflected in the deliberate adoption of scientific terminology that extended beyond scholarship, to encompass attitudes towards the acquisition and display of museum objects. In picture galleries this was reflected in the drive to situate art within its historical framework.<sup>48</sup> The logical arrangement of paintings according to period and school, championed by Waagen and first implemented in Britain at the National Gallery, was designed to illustrate the complete history of western art.<sup>49</sup> Emphasis therefore shifted to the acquisition of works as 'specimens' or examples to fit into a representative scheme.<sup>50</sup> Comparable to articulating the evolution of art through a selection of paintings by the central European masters, the National Portrait Gallery sought to present a linear narrative of British history via portraits of its chief protagonists.<sup>51</sup> After the Gallery's move from cramped quarters in Great George Street, Westminster to more spacious apartments at South Kensington in 1870, the coherent ordering of the collection became one of Scharf's enduring concerns.<sup>52</sup> He strove to accommodate all portraits within a logical programme, grouping works under the reign of successive monarchs and encouraging the chronological

<sup>46</sup> Art history as an academic discipline would not become truly established in Britain until the founding of the Courtauld Institute of Art in 1932, whereas in Germany art history was part of the university syllabus from 1830. On the establishment of the Courtauld Institute and the Slade Professorships at Oxford and Cambridge, see Geddes Poole, *Stewards of the Nation's Art*, 20.

<sup>47</sup> Christopher Whitehead, *Museums and the Construction of Disciplines: Art and Archaeology in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, London: Duckworth, 2009, 66.

<sup>48</sup> Scharf's chronological hang of the Old Master paintings at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition is evidence of his direct engagement with this principle at mid century; see Heath, 'George Scharf and the early National Portrait Gallery', 116–120.

<sup>49</sup> Though this approach came to dominate art museum arrangement in Britain in the nineteenth century, based on the German model, Nick Prior reminds us that the principle of chronological display has its roots in eighteenth-century France, specifically developments at the Louvre; see Nick Prior, *Museums and Modernity: Art Galleries and the Making of Modern Culture*, Oxford: New York: Berg, 2002, 33.

<sup>50</sup> Whitehead, *Museums and the Construction of Disciplines*, 67.

<sup>51</sup> The fact that the NPG's collection is ordered according to the lifetime of the sitters represented within, rather than - for example - in illustration of the development of portraiture as an artistic genre, reminds us of the Institution's hybrid status as a museum of both history and art.

<sup>52</sup> The South Kensington move was intended as a temporary solution to the critical shortage of display space experienced at the NPG's first home, in what had been a private house. Though Scharf was hopeful that some other central London location would be found, the collection remained at South Kensington until 1885, when it was loaned out to the South Kensington Museum's outpost at Bethnal Green.

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progression of visitors through the galleries. Scharf expressed dismay at the largely arbitrary arrangement of the collection when it was transferred as a loan to the Bethnal Green Museum in 1885 and directly administered by officers of the Department of Science and Art; he worked hard to devise a system of display for the portraits upon their relocation to a permanent purpose-built home at St Martin's Place in 1896, which unfortunately he did not live to see implemented.<sup>53</sup>

### Mapping Scharf's London

Despite a lack of overt evidence confirming Scharf's deliberate engagement with developments in art historical scholarship or the systematic arranging of collections, I contend that the meticulousness he applied to research and the nature of his specific curatorial interventions at the Gallery positioned him in league with fellow professionals, each resolutely working to their own agenda, yet together formulating a basis for standardized museum and gallery practice during the later nineteenth century. The potential for Scharf to interact with colleagues was substantial; his private diaries and official Secretary's journals chart an extremely rich and busy life. A confirmed bachelor, Scharf's work and leisure time overlapped in a seamless succession of appointments to inspect portraits, invitations to dine, visits to exhibitions, dealers and auction houses and extended research trips. Neither was there a clear division between his personal and professional relationships. Both his inner - exclusively male - circle of friends and his wider network of acquaintances largely comprised fellow museum practitioners, librarians, art historians, antiquaries, collectors and artists.<sup>54</sup> Throughout the year his calendar was punctuated with lengthy visits to English country houses to sketch and make notes on collections or as a guest of his aristocratic friends, but at heart he was a Londoner and moved comfortably between a number of locations across the capital that held the potential for such professional and social exchanges.<sup>55</sup>

Although at various times belonging to several learned societies, including the Archaeological Institute, the Fine Arts Club and the Arundel Society, Scharf remained a loyal and life-long member of the Society of Antiquaries; he habitually attended gatherings at Somerset and then Burlington House, until ill-health

<sup>53</sup> For a full analysis of Scharf's approach to hanging the collection across the Gallery's early locations, see Heath, 'George Scharf and the early National Portrait Gallery', 111–139.

<sup>54</sup> Scharf's friend and executor Freeman Marius O'Donoghue maintained that he 'went much into society, and throughout life enjoyed the esteem and affection of a wide circle of friends'; see F. M. O'Donoghue, 'Scharf, George (1820–1895)', *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn., London: Smith, Elder & Co., 50, 1885–1900, 410. Whilst Scharf's associates were overwhelmingly male, his early diaries do contain occasional references to women connected with this sphere, including Anna Jameson and Elizabeth Eastlake.

<sup>55</sup> Repeated visits were largely to the homes of consecutive Chairmen of the Gallery Trustees: Philip Stanhope at Chevening and Charles Stewart Hardinge at South Park, both near Sevenoaks in Kent. Alongside these and other country house collections, Scharf also made visits to the London town houses that were their counterparts and often contained significant portraits.

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prevented him.<sup>56</sup> Over the course of his career he became thoroughly engrained with its community of scholars: he served on the Council and the Executive Committee, contributed papers on his research, published in its journal *Archaeologia* and even re-hung and re-catalogued the Society's pictures.<sup>57</sup> Scharf's personal association with the Society's Secretary Charles Knight Watson, for example, held particular implications for his work. In 1883 he was allowed to take away on loan a unique volume of tracings after mural paintings of Edward III and his family on the wall of St Stephen's Chapel Westminster, which were destroyed by the fire at the Houses of Parliament in 1834. Having been permitted to make facsimiles of these images, engravings after Scharf's copies were displayed amongst the earliest portraits in the 'Plantagenet room' of the National Portrait Gallery at South Kensington.<sup>58</sup>

Scharf's 1855 election to the Athenaeum Club in Waterloo Place off Pall Mall was also significant. In his history of the club, Frank Richard Cowell notes that unlike many of the other London clubs, it was not the preserve of a wealthy or aristocratic elite 'but, like all true elites, it was an 'inclusive elite' to which achievement in any eminent cultural activity qualified for admission'.<sup>59</sup> Under this principle Scharf, despite his relatively humble social background, was able to mix on equal terms with men of literary, scientific and artistic distinction. Though most often to be found in the club's library looking up a reference or copying a portrait

<sup>56</sup> In his notice of Scharf's death in 1895, President Augustus Wollaston Franks records: 'The connection of our good friend with our Society was long and intimate...His last visit to the Society was at our Heraldic Exhibition last year, where he came with tottering steps but a clear mind, taking the greatest interest in the display that had been brought together'; *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 1893–95, 15, 378–9. Scharf's 1852 certificate of election as Fellow of the Society was signed by, among others, the diarist Henry Crabb Robinson, Philip Stanhope (then Viscount Mahon) and Edward Hawkins, keeper of Antiquities at the British Museum; see certificates of candidates for election, 11 Mar. 1847–15 Jan. 1857, 40, Society of Antiquaries, London. Scharf qualified for election to this society (and the Archaeological Institute) not least on account of his work documenting Lycian antiquities during the expeditions of Sir Charles Fellows to Asia Minor in the 1840s. His subsequent publication of numerous learned essays on historic portraits effectively sealed his reputation as a scholar.

<sup>57</sup> See George Scharf, *A Catalogue of the Pictures belonging to the Society of Antiquaries, Somerset House*, London, Bungay: John Childs & Son, 1865, copy Heinz Archive and Library, NPG; and Susan Pearce, *Visions of Antiquity: The Society of Antiquaries of London, 1707–2007*, London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 2007, 211. Scharf had many friends amongst the Fellows, but two of the closest were antiquary Harold Lee-Dillon, 17<sup>th</sup> Viscount Dillon (later NPG Chairman) and herald Everard Green.

<sup>58</sup> See minutes of the 168<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Trustees, 20 Nov. 1883, NPG 1/4, 60–61, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. See also 'The National Portrait Gallery', *The Times*, 24 Nov. 1883, 8.

<sup>59</sup> Frank Richard Cowell, *The Athenaeum: Club and Social Life in London, 1824–1974*, London: Heinemann, 1975, 12. Scharf was elected to the club before his appointment at the NPG on the merit of pre-existing scholarly endeavours. His membership was proposed by Charles Hampden Turner and seconded by Sir Charles Fellows; Ballot paper for 'George Scharf Jr. Esq., Artist F.S.A, M.R.S.S, 1 Torrington Square', 29 Jan. 1855, MEM/1/3/19, Athenaeum Club Archives, London.



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from an engraved volume, Scharf's diaries also confirm numerous instances of dining with, taking tea amongst, or even meeting on the front steps, illustrious members including: archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard, politician and National Gallery Trustee Sir William Gregory, antiquary Albert Way and on occasion, statesman William Ewart Gladstone.<sup>60</sup> It is the expectation of exactly these types of social encounters that Scharf acknowledged in his round-up of events for 1855, when he noted: 'My election into the Athenaeum Club promises to be very important'.<sup>61</sup>

A long association with the Royal Academy at Burlington House likewise facilitated Scharf's access to the great and the good of the Victorian art world. As stated above, he was a permanent fixture at private views of the Old Masters exhibitions in December, though more surprising is Scharf's regular attendance of the annual Summer Exhibition pre-views in May, showcasing contemporary British art not immediately within his professional remit. This suggests that beyond the possibilities for research, such occasions appealed as chances to meet and interact with members of the art establishment.<sup>62</sup> Certainly Scharf's records of the private views document who rather than what he saw, often listing the 'many friends' he encountered in the course of the event. Indeed, he was a willing participant in the Academy's social calendar and also frequented the annual 'Conversazione' in June, which marked the Queen's official birthday. From 1879 Scharf attended the Royal Academy banquet that took place on the Saturday before the start of the Summer Exhibition and was held in the main room.<sup>63</sup> This was an opportunity to engage not just with Academicians, but also with the highest-ranking members of society and office.<sup>64</sup> In turn Scharf cut a familiar figure amongst members of the institution, his

<sup>60</sup> See George Scharf, personal diary, 13 Mar. 1874; NPG7/3/1/31, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Scharf records regular visits to the Athenaeum where he would meet 'many friends', for example: 'Athenaeum Club to Ballot...Sir Frederick Leighton with whom a long talk' (12 Feb. 1888, NPG7/3/1/45, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

<sup>61</sup> See George Scharf, personal diary, 1 Jan. 1856, NPG7/3/1/12, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Scharf retained his membership until November 1894, shortly before his death.

<sup>62</sup> It is worth bearing in mind that Scharf's training as an artist and continued interest in contemporary art may also have prompted his attendance of the Royal Academy summer shows (at which in his youth, he had exhibited some of his own work). From the 1880s, Scharf also regularly attended the private views of the Grosvenor Gallery and the New Gallery.

<sup>63</sup> Whilst from 1882 Scharf was automatically designated an 'ex-officio invitee' by way of his position as director of the National Portrait Gallery, for the first three years of his attendance - whilst still secretary of the Gallery - he was listed as a 'private invitee'. This is testament to his status within the art world, independent of his official position, and perhaps also the strength of his friendships with members of the Royal Academy's Council; see annual dinner invitation books 1873-1900, RA/SEC/25/1/18 & 19, Royal Academy of Arts Archive, London.

<sup>64</sup> In 1892 Scharf was obliged to forgo the private view and banquet, and concedes in an explanatory letter to the Academy's secretary that it 'grieves me exceedingly to feel that I am loosing my chance of attending one of the most interesting functions of the year'; George Scharf to Frederick Alexis Eaton, 27 Apr. 1892, RA/SEC/11/58/1, Royal Academy of Arts

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expertise in portraiture and collection arranging was acknowledged and positively received. In 1881 for example, he records lunching at the Academy with the Hanging Committee for the Old Masters Exhibition of that year, after which the position of two pictures lent by the Duke of Marlborough from the collection at Blenheim Palace – which had been the object of his intimate study – were altered to his suggestion.<sup>65</sup> His unofficial involvement in the organization of the Old Master (or Winter) exhibitions speaks volumes for his reputation during this period, as the academicians were known for being generally resistant to external advice.

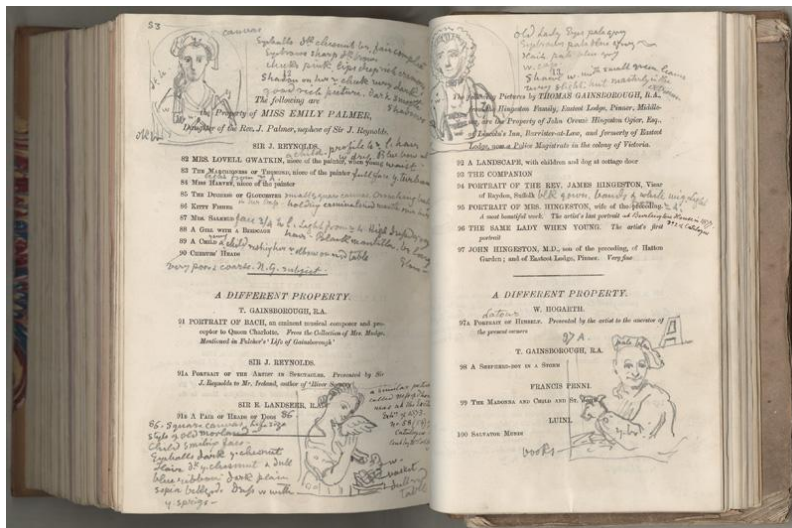


Figure 5: Sketches and notes by George Scharf in his catalogue for a sale of 'Ancient & Modern Pictures' at Christie's, 4 Jul. 1874, Scharf Library, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. © National Portrait Gallery, London

Scharf's frequent rounds of West End picture dealers and auction houses in search of portraits to bring to the attention of the Trustees ensured a continued intimacy with the machinations of – and actors within – the commercial art market. He would often visit multiple locations in a day, deliberating over portrait engravings for the reference collection or identifying potential acquisitions to be sent on to the Gallery on approval and examined at the next Board meeting.<sup>66</sup> Throughout his diaries particular names reoccur: Henry Graves & Co. on Pall Mall, Paul & Dominic Colnaghi in Pall Mall East, Thomas Agnew & Sons on Old Bond Street, Henry Farrer & Son on New Bond Street, Charles Henry Waters in Pimlico, John and then Jane Noseda on the Strand, the auctioneers Foster's on Pall Mall and Christie, Manson & Woods in King Street. Pre-views of the sales at Christie's provided significant opportunities for research and interaction with members of the art world, as did the sales themselves. Located in St James's at the physical centre of

Archive, London. With thanks to Archivist Mark Pomeroy for drawing my attention to this material (Jun. 2016).

<sup>65</sup> See George Scharf, personal diary, 24 Dec. 1881, NPG7/3/1/38, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>66</sup> See for example, George Scharf, personal diary 5 Jul. 1881: 'To Fosters, Christies, Colnaghi's, Parkers, Graves's & Noseda's in quest of pictures for sale'; NPG7/3/1/38, HAL. Marcia Pointon also remarks upon Scharf's 'active investigation' of portraits for purchase; see Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, 227. Dealers would routinely have pictures sent to the NPG and then arrange for them to be collected again, whilst Christie's regularly sent portraits for inspection ahead of a sale.

the London art market, it was the leading handler for art sales during the period and a channel through which historical pictures from private collections across the country (and abroad) became, briefly, accessible.<sup>67</sup> Scharf's run of annotated Christie's sale catalogues spanning 1858–94, still held in the Heinz Archive and Library, underlines the central importance of this establishment in the execution of his professional duties over the length of his career. The margins of these catalogues are crammed with quick sketches and notes of portraits that caught his attention (fig. 5), and his private view invitations are regularly bound into the volumes themselves.<sup>68</sup> The crowded rooms in King Street were often the sites of last minute negotiations between interested parties, where Scharf was able to gauge the atmosphere surrounding a particular sale. As late as 1893, he noted in his diary for the day preceding the sale of pictures from Humphrey Mildmay's collection on 24 June: 'Busy day at Christies saw many friends. Ld De L'Isle, Sir Villiers Lister, Julian Goldsmid, Lord Rowton, Lord Savile again, talked to [William] Agnew & [Thomas H.] Woods... Arranged about bidding for pictures'.<sup>69</sup> Scharf rarely bid himself at auction; he normally submitted commission bids or enlisted a dealer to act as agent on the Gallery's behalf, although he usually attended the Saturday sales to observe the outcome.<sup>70</sup>

In the museum sphere the British Museum, as a location for professional interaction, cast a long shadow. This had been a familiar site since Scharf's youth; a place he visited regularly to study and make sketches after objects in the collections. Between the dates of his tenure at the National Portrait Gallery, Scharf cultivated friendships with individuals in almost every museum department, so that a single research trip often also entailed several visits to 'friends' on duty or in the museum residences.<sup>71</sup> In the Coins and Medals department these included William Sandys

<sup>67</sup> See Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850–1939*, Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2011, 9.

<sup>68</sup> *Christies Catalogues with Notes and Sketches*, Mar. 1858–Jul. 1894, 27 vols [bound with annotations by George Scharf], Scharf Library, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. It is evident that Scharf made notes and drawings in the catalogues during the private views and the sales themselves. In one instance, Scharf made a quick sketch of Sir John Charles Robinson at the sale of Albert Levy's collection on 3 May 1884 (21), and inscribed the front cover of the catalogue thus: 'GS 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1884, with notes taken during the sale'.

<sup>69</sup> George Scharf, personal diary, 23 Jun. 1893, NPG7/3/1/50, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. The prices realised for the portraits of interest to the Trustees exceeded the commission bids in this instance, and were purchased by Agnew's acting on behalf of private clients. Thomas Henry Woods was Scharf's central contact at Christies, regularly alerting Scharf to portraits coming up for sale and also soliciting his expertise in identifying sitters. On Scharf's professional and personal relationship with Sir William Agnew, which proved of direct benefit to his work for the National Portrait Gallery on a number of occasions, see Heath, 'George Scharf and the early National Portrait Gallery', 59–61.

<sup>70</sup> Scharf also oversaw acquisitions at Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge off the Strand, although of the London auction houses Christie's commanded the majority of business from the NPG Trustees, facilitating 38 purchases over a thirty-year period.

<sup>71</sup> Scharf's long-term friendship with Augustus Wollaston Franks is discussed in detail in the following section. Friends of similar longevity included Edward Hawkins (keeper of Antiquities from 1826), Sir Charles Newton (keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities from

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Wright Vaux (keeper from 1861) and his assistant Herbert Appold Grueber. The latter would send Scharf casts of coins and medallions featuring portraits of British sitters such as Henry VIII and William Pitt, to aid his research. This was especially useful for his long-term project to determine authentic likenesses of Mary Queen of Scots.<sup>72</sup> In the Manuscripts department he was close with Richard Rivington Holmes, Edward Augustus Bond and his successor as principal librarian, Sir Edward Maunde Thompson.<sup>73</sup>

The connections most crucial to his work, however, were those maintained with three successive keepers of the Prints and Drawings department between 1857 and 1895: William Hookham Carpenter, also an involved National Portrait Gallery Trustee; George William Reid; and Sir Sidney Colvin.<sup>74</sup> Surviving letters attest to continued communication between Scharf and the holders of this post, and confirm a regular exchange of information and expertise. His friendship with these men and more junior members of the department - including Lionel Cust, Louis Fagan and Freeman Marius O'Donoghue - ensured immediate access to the collection for the purposes of portrait authentication, and an insider's knowledge of new acquisitions pertinent to his work.<sup>75</sup> This extract from one of Carpenter's letters neatly illustrates the position of privilege he enjoyed:

My dear Scharf, Thank you for your obliging information as to the portrait of [Jonathan] Richardson. When you come here I should wish you to see a very interesting print of Nelson I obtained this morning. It

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1861) and Edmund Oldfield (assistant in the Antiquities department), although these relationships cannot be considered of specific advantage to his work for the National Portrait Gallery.

<sup>72</sup> See letters from Herbert Grueber to George Scharf, 20 Feb. and 12 May 1889, NPG7/3/3/20, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG; and George Scharf, personal diary 18 May 1889: 'Working at Mary coins & costumes. Found the plaster casts useful' (NPG7/3/1/46, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG). Scharf would often dine with Vaux and his wife in their museum residence, whilst Grueber regularly visited Scharf at home and worked closely with him in organizing the New Gallery exhibitions from 1888.

<sup>73</sup> Holmes was appointed librarian at Windsor Castle in 1870 and socialized with Scharf at his home and at the Society of Antiquaries, of which he was also a Fellow. See George Scharf, personal diary, 19 May 1889: 'Lunch with Mrs Bond at BM...Bond took me on to the ground which was occupied by his garden & now being excavated for the foundations of a new print room & galleries'; NPG7/3/1/39, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Thompson remained an important contact at the Museum and both he and Bond attended Scharf's funeral at Brompton Cemetery (see minutes of the 210<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Trustees, 9 May 1895, NPG 1/5, 160–170, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG). In the 1860s and 70s Scharf was also on friendly terms with John Winter Jones, keeper of the department of Printed Books from 1856 and principal librarian (1866).

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, George Scharf, Secretary's journal, 30 Mar. 1881: 'To Nosedá, Fawcett's, British Museum to verify engravings & to obtain Mr G.W. Reid's judgement on certain impressions'; NPG7/1/1/5, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>75</sup> For an account of the department during this period, see Antony Griffiths, *Landmarks in Print Collecting: Connoisseurs and Donors at the British Museum since 1753*, London: British Museum Press, 1996, 13–15.

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is a profile printed in colours from a picture by [Henry] Singleton. It is full of intelligence and strongly indicates the character of the man. Should I be absent Reid will show it you. I really prefer it to any other I have seen.<sup>76</sup>

Scharf knew Sidney Colvin from the early 1880s; in 1883 he visited Colvin at Cambridge whilst he was director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, and shortly before his appointment to the British Museum.<sup>77</sup> Over the course of his long keepership, Colvin implemented a number of significant reforms that saw the department reorganized along more professional lines.<sup>78</sup> His passion for his work and ability to move easily in different circles of British society secured contacts amongst a wide body of museum professionals, and an influential position within the contemporary art world.<sup>79</sup> Colvin and Scharf interacted casually at social gatherings or conferred at length during the latter's regular visits to the print room. It was in this spirit that the two men liaised over objects of common interest to their respective collections; extant correspondence documents the manner in which institutional collaboration was carried out in ad hoc and informal terms. For example, in relation to drawings of Elizabeth I and a 'Lady' in the dress of Mary Queen of Scots in the Wimpole sale of 1888, Colvin wrote a swift postcard to Scharf: 'I gather from your note that you do not intend to try for the drawings yourself – in which case I shall certainly do my best to secure them'.<sup>80</sup> Likewise Scharf approached Colvin in 1892 and expressed his concern that a portrait of the artist John Leech [NPG 899], sold at Christie's and offered for re-sale by Colnaghi's, be secured for either national collection:

My dear Colvin, I have been trying to come to you at the Museum to talk over two or three subjects, but in vain. When I went to Mr Lawrence's house & saw his pictures he told me that [John Everett] Millais wished us to possess the John Leech...I inferred that the reserve price would be

<sup>76</sup> William Hookham Carpenter to George Scharf, 11 May 1860, NPG7/1/1/4/2/3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. See 1861,0209.114, P&D, BM. George William Reid was Carpenter's assistant in the department before succeeding him as keeper in 1866.

<sup>77</sup> See George Scharf, personal diary, 1–4 Aug. 1883: 'Breakfasted with Colvin. Went with him to see his new museum and lecture gallery in course of building. To the Fitzwilliam and saw the collection of casts for the new museum'; NPG7/3/1/40, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Colvin was responsible for developing a substantial collection of casts from antique sculpture, transferred to the new Museum of Classical Archaeology at Cambridge University, in 1884.

<sup>78</sup> This included the recruitment of university-trained historians as curators and the development of a more rigorous and scholarly model of cataloguing. On Colvin's professional practice at the British Museum see Jessica Feather's article, in this issue.

<sup>79</sup> See Griffiths, *Landmarks in Print Collecting*, 14–15.

<sup>80</sup> Sidney Colvin to George Scharf, 22 Jun. 1888, on card stamped 'British Museum', pasted into Scharf's annotated Christie's catalogue, 26 Jun. 1888; see Scharf Library, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. See also George Scharf, Secretary's journal, 28 Apr. 1885: 'To Professor Sidney Colvin at the British Museum to make arrangements for the bidding for the Cheney [Louis de] Carmontelle drawings [Edward Cheney sale, Sotheby's, 29 Apr. 1885]. To Messrs. Colnaghi's' (NPG7/1/1/1/5, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

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£100 and wrote to inform you of it, as I wished, next to us, that the B. Museum should have it...[Colnaghi's] fixed the price of £35 on it and at that figure it is offered to us. As Millais is one of our Board I feel little doubt that my Trustees will accept it. If not, I will let you know.<sup>81</sup>

In terms of providing a template for art museum practice, the National Gallery served as a crucial site of comparison and Scharf remained in close contact with various members of its curatorial staff. When establishing institutional procedures within the National Portrait Gallery, he initially sought advice from Sir Charles Eastlake, as the National Gallery's first director and a founding National Portrait Gallery Trustee, and his keeper Ralph Nicholson Wornum. Already a respected scholar and writer of art historical texts, the latter was appointed in 1855 at Eastlake's recommendation and went on to support the work of his successors Sir William Boxall and Sir Frederic William Burton. Over the course of his twenty-two year career, Wornum oversaw the day-to-day management of the collection, especially when the directors spent time travelling in Europe in search of new acquisitions during the summer recess. His role focused (alongside that of the director's) on researching, cataloguing, interpreting and displaying the pictures at Trafalgar Square, for which he maintained a 'practical administration characterized by efficiency and careful record keeping'.<sup>82</sup> He was therefore an important point of reference for Scharf, whose official responsibilities overlapped distinctly. In his diary for 8 June 1859 - just three years into the job - Scharf records one of many trips 'to see Mr. Wornum respecting catalogues & modes of meeting applications or pictures sent on inspection'.<sup>83</sup> Between this date and Wornum's death in 1877, he visited the Gallery frequently to consult with his colleague on various methods of operation, including: the format for returns to Parliament, the course adopted for employees' sick leave, heating arrangements in the galleries and the National Gallery's approach to 'polishing pictures'.<sup>84</sup> Scharf was also to borrow the format of

<sup>81</sup> George Scharf to Sidney Colvin, 12 May 1892, Departmental Letter Book, 1890-92, P&D, BM. With thanks to Jessica Feather for bringing this letter to my attention (2015). Colnaghi's paid £24 for the portrait at the sale of Edwin Lawrence's effects at Christies on 6 May 1892. Millais previously offered this portrait to the NPG in 1864, though the then Chairman of Trustees Lord Stanhope considered the sitter of insufficient merit for inclusion in the collection; see Philip Stanhope to George Scharf, 29 Nov. 1894 (NPG7/1/1/4/8, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Secombe, 'Wornum, Ralph Nicholson (1812-1877)', rev. David Carter, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., May 2015; <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29978>, accessed 20 Aug. 2015.

<sup>83</sup> George Scharf, personal diary, NPG7/3/1/16, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. James Hamilton categorizes Wornum as a 'pioneer scholar-curator', 'who appreciated the importance of clarity, order and interpretation': James Hamilton, *A Strange Business: Making Art and Money in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, London: Atlantic Books, 2014, 285. In this respect, his approach to his professional duties was very similar to Scharf's.

<sup>84</sup> See, for example, George Scharf, Secretary's journal: 12 Jan. 1872; 26 Oct. 1872; 13 Feb. 1873; 16 Mar. 1877, NPG7/1/1/1/3-4, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Wornum also bestowed his scholarly expertise in the service of the National Portrait Gallery, on one occasion visiting the Gallery to pronounce judgement on the authenticity of a so-called

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his expanded National Portrait Gallery collection catalogue from Wornum and Eastlake's *Descriptive and Historical Catalogue of the Pictures in the National Gallery*, first published in 1847.<sup>85</sup> Eastlake was additionally an active National Portrait Gallery Trustee and, whilst the relationship between the two men seemingly remained professional and formal, Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon argue that they nonetheless 'appear to have been sympathetic colleagues, united by their commitment to systematizing and overseeing institutional management'.<sup>86</sup>

The National Gallery continued to function for Scharf as a locus of professional expertise, where he also engaged with Eastlake's successors, William Boxall<sup>87</sup> and Frederic Burton as well as with Wornum's successor Charles Locke Eastlake on subjects ranging from the repair and lining of pictures, to suggested regulations for students in the gallery.<sup>88</sup>

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Turner self-portrait (1 Jun. 1866, NPG7/1/1/1/2, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG). Scharf similarly assisted the National Gallery, especially on matters of iconography. In his diary for 1 Jul. 1861, for example, Wornum records the following in relation to the identity of the sitter in a Florentine portrait [NG 670]: 'George Scharf tells me that the Maltese Cross is always white, if so our picture does not represent a Knight of Malta, the cross is red'; NGA2/3/2/13, National Gallery Archives (as noted by Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World*, London: National Gallery Company Ltd., 2011, 239 (132)). See also George Scharf, personal diary, 3 May 1858: 'Called in at National Gallery and gave Wornum the names of several Saints in the new pictures' (NPG7/3/1/15, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

<sup>85</sup> On Scharf's redevelopment of the NPG's collection catalogue along more scholarly lines, see Heath, 'George Scharf and the early National Portrait Gallery', 150–55.

<sup>86</sup> Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 120. Scharf and Eastlake's acquaintance certainly predated the former's appointment to the NPG in 1857, probably beginning in the early 1850s when Scharf worked on Eastlake's English edition of Kugler's *Handbook of Italian Painting*. On Eastlake's professionalizing approach to art historical scholarship and gallery practice see Susanna Avery-Quash and Corina Meyer's article, in this issue. And for Eastlake's professionalization of picture conservation, see Susanna Avery-Quash, 'Sir Charles Eastlake and conservation at the National Gallery, London', *The Burlington Magazine*, 157: 1353, Dec. 2015, 846–854.

<sup>87</sup> Scharf and Boxall (director, 1866–74) were good friends and frequently conferred when pictures of interest to both institutions came up at auction. This was the case with Hogarth's small self-portrait [NPG 289], which was sold at Christie's on 10 Jul. 1869. Boxall agreed not to bid for the picture after learning of the NPG Trustees' intention to acquire the portrait. In a draft memo (intended for an unidentified publication) Scharf insists: 'The authorities of the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery do not bid at public sales against each other. Mr Boxall & the N.P.G Secretary are on terms of close friendship & frequently hold communication on matters of art'; see RP NPG 289, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. The portrait was later acquired by the NPG from Agnew's, who had successfully bid for the picture at the sale.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, George Scharf, personal diary, 29 Aug. 1871 and 9 Oct. 1889, NPG7/3/1/28 and 46, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Scharf used the NG's leaflet outlining rules for students as a template for the NPG's, simply inserting 'Portrait' into the title and inscribing on the front: 'guide for the style of setting up the N.P.G. Regulations for Students' (see NPG77/8, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG). Interactions between Burton and



## Ashley Place and its participants

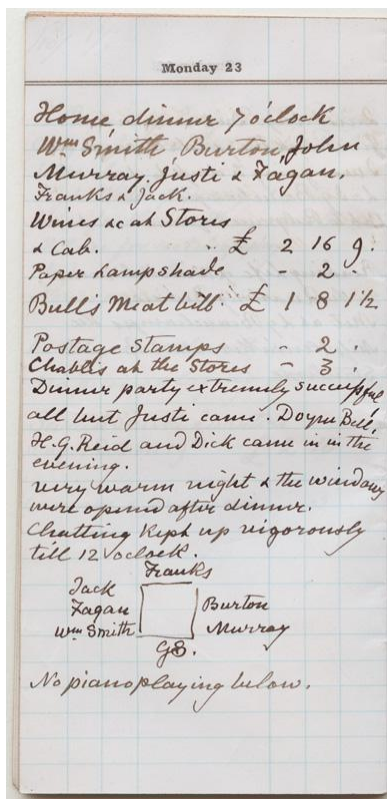


Figure 6: George Scharf, page from his personal diary, 23 Mar. 1874, NPG7/3/1/31, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. © National Portrait Gallery, London

Scharf was a frequent guest at the London homes of colleagues or aristocratic friends yet from the 1860s, and with increasing regularity after moving from quarters above the National Portrait Gallery in Great George Street to rented rooms at 8 Ashley Place, Victoria, he held his own dinner parties at which - in addition to a core of fond and loyal friends - he carefully drew acquaintances from his social and professional networks together. Scharf's diaries reveal his interest in fostering a dynamic atmosphere on such occasions. Alongside details of the menu, he routinely recorded the order in which he placed individuals around his table; the success of the event was judged afterwards by the extent of lively conversation generated. Writing to Deputy Chairman of Gallery Trustees William Smith in 1874, Scharf reflected on the effectiveness of his latest grouping: 'The great secret of entertainment on a small scale is I believe strictly to select friends who have (or should have) relations to one another rather than to the host himself. It was very gratifying to find that I succeeded in making some people known for the first time to each other and also in making others still better acquainted than before'.<sup>89</sup> His guests in this instance were Smith, Frederic Burton, the publisher John Murray, Augustus Wollaston Franks of the British Museum, close friend Jack Luard Pattison and Louis Fagan. Alongside the seating plan for the evening, Scharf also noted in his diary that

Scharf are discussed at length in the following section. Charles Locke Eastlake (1836–1906) was Sir Charles Eastlake's nephew.

<sup>89</sup> George Scharf to William Smith, 24 Mar. 1874, NPG20/3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

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‘chatting kept up vigorously till 12 o’clock’ (fig. 6).<sup>90</sup> For the series ‘Celebrities at Home’ a writer in *The World* likened Scharf’s Ashley Place assemblies, if not to a salon, then to orchestrated ‘symposia’.<sup>91</sup> These events were by all accounts animated affairs, and Scharf a convivial and popular host. Wilhelm von Bode, the German scholar and curator, recalls benefitting from his hospitality on a number of Sundays from lunch to ‘Wild Suppers’, where he had the opportunity to meet various domestic and foreign scholars and museum professionals with whom Scharf offered ‘the richest and most convenient opportunity to talk’.<sup>92</sup>

This would have been of especial use to Bode, whose own achievements as an art historian must be considered in relation to his prodigious activity as a museum administrator and his efforts towards extending the collections of the Berlin museums.<sup>93</sup> Jeremy Warren has stressed the particular importance of Bode’s links with Britain and the British, noting that in the second half of the nineteenth century the best museums and private collections were in Britain and ‘as a young man Bode set out systematically to study and learn his way around them’.<sup>94</sup> To this end, forging links with individuals who might afford him information on and access to artworks was a necessity. Scharf himself was a key contact in this regard, especially considering his familiarity with the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough and his collection at Blenheim Palace. Writing to Bode in 1879, presumably in response to an expressed desire to visit Blenheim whilst in England, Scharf assured him: ‘Dear Dr Bode, I have at once written and sent to you a line to the Duke’s agent who resides just outside the gates of Blenheim Palace. If he is there he will afford you every facility’.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, Scharf’s private notes on Old Master pictures in British collections were a central resource, mined by Bode for information: ‘I should be very glad to give you ‘the run’ of all my sketchbooks of my earlier days even before the Manchester Exh. of 1857...But still some of my notes of the subsequent British Institution Exhibitions

<sup>90</sup> George Scharf, personal diary, 23 Mar. 1874, NPG7/3/1/31, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>91</sup> Anon., ‘Celebrities at Home: No. DCCXLVIII. Mr George Scharf, C.B., F.S.A., in Ashley Place’, *The World*, 28 Sep. 1892, 468.

<sup>92</sup> Wilhelm von Bode, *Mein Leben...*, Berlin: H. Reckendorf, 1930, 173. See, for example, George Scharf, personal diary 20 Apr. 1879 [Sunday]: ‘Grueber, Franks & Dr Bode came to lunch. Dr Bode remained all day with me, Franks came again in the evening to supper. He & Bode staid[sic] till 12 o’clock’; NPG7/3/1/36, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Foreign participants in the Ashley Place gatherings were usually European but occasionally came from farther afield, including Charles Callahan Perkins of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, who visited in 1862 and 1881. On Perkins’s career and accomplishments see Deborah Stein’s article, in this issue.

<sup>93</sup> See Stephanie Dieckvoss, *Wilhelm von Bode and the London Art World*, MA thesis, University of London (Courtauld Institute of Art), 1995, 1. Bode was appointed director of the sculpture department of the Berlin Museum (later Altes Museum) in 1883 and director of the paintings collection in 1890; throughout his career he maintained extensive networks of dealers and collectors on an international scale. Scharf’s diaries record 19 visits by Bode to Ashley Place between 1879 and 1892.

<sup>94</sup> Jeremy Warren, ‘Bode and the British’, *Jahrbuch Der Berliner Museen* 38, 1 Jan. 1996, 122.

<sup>95</sup> George Scharf to Wilhelm von Bode, 5 May 1879, Zentralarchiv, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, IV/NL Bode 4777 (Scharf, George).

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and the Burlington House collections may afford you some fruit'.<sup>96</sup> During the 1880s, the movement of artworks from country house collections to the London market provided important opportunities for purchases for Berlin. In this respect Bode had the advantage over many of his contemporaries. Warren notes that when the Marlborough collection came up for sale in 1885 he was well prepared, having already made several visits to Blenheim to study the pictures.<sup>97</sup> In return, Scharf enjoyed his intimate association with the prestigious museum official, categorizing their relationship under 'Friendships one may boast of'.<sup>98</sup>

Scharf did much to encourage and facilitate the work of a number of younger professionals within the modest four walls of his home. For example, the artist and gallery manager Charles Edward Hallé wrote appreciatively: 'Very many thanks for...your kind general invitation to Ashley Place – you may be sure I shall avail myself of it as I like having a chat with you & the men who are always to be found in the congenial atmosphere of your house'.<sup>99</sup> For the art critic and future keeper of the Wallace Collection Claude Phillips, an invitation to one such gathering in 1888 proved a valuable opportunity to network: 'My dear Scharf...I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed your dinner the other night; it was quite something to look back to as an exceptionally pleasant gathering presided over by an exceptionally genial host. It was besides a profitable evening to me as I made great friends with both the learned Doctors and am to meet them presently in Paris'.<sup>100</sup> Phillips was referring to Bode and the Dutch scholar and collector Abraham Bredius.<sup>101</sup> Besides this exposure to a range of international contacts, such men utilized the extensive scholarly resources offered in this environment. Bode, for instance, made use of Scharf's specialized library, referring particularly to the annotated catalogues and private sketchbooks when researching his book on Rembrandt in 1891.<sup>102</sup> Further

<sup>96</sup> George Scharf to Wilhelm von Bode, 2 Apr. 1882, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, IV/NL Bode 4777 (Scharf, George).

<sup>97</sup> Warren, 'Bode and the British', 123. Bode secured four paintings for Berlin. The 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough disposed of a number of pictures from the collection before the Christie's sale in 1886. For more on the active interest of Bode and officers of the Berlin museums in the Marlborough collection during the 1880s, see Paul Tucker ed., *A Connoisseur and his clients: the correspondence of Charles Fairfax Murray with Frederic Burton, Wilhelm Bode and Julius Meyer (1867-1914)*, Walpole Society, 79, 2017, 78 (520).

<sup>98</sup> George Scharf to Wilhelm von Bode, 1 Jan. 1888, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, IV/NL Bode 4777 (Scharf, George).

<sup>99</sup> Charles Edward Hallé to George Scharf, 1 Jun. 1889, NPG7/2/7, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Hallé assisted Sir Coutts Lindsay in creating the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877 and founded the New Gallery with Joseph Comyns Carr in 1888.

<sup>100</sup> Claude Phillips to George Scharf, 17 Feb. 1888, NPG7/3/3/20/6, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Another regular guest was the art historian (William) Martin Conway, Professor of Art at University College, Liverpool during the 1880s and future director of the Imperial War Museum.

<sup>101</sup> See George Scharf, personal diary, 13 Feb. 1888, NPG7/3/1/38, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Bredius became director of the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague in 1889.

<sup>102</sup> Bode, *Mein Leben*, 173. See George Scharf, personal diary, 14 Jun. 1891: 'Dr Bode did not come till after lunch. We then had a full examination of all my Manchester & British

beneficiaries included Herbert Grueber and Leonard C. Lindsay, fellow organizers of the New Gallery's Stuart, Tudor and Guelph exhibitions (1889–91). Whilst compiling the official catalogue for the consecutive shows the two more junior scholars regularly worked in Scharf's library, making use of his volumes of historical reference before staying to dine.<sup>103</sup> Ashley Place therefore functioned as both a social and an intellectual hub.

Of the names which reoccur in Scharf's diaries, that of Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks, the British Museum's keeper of British and Mediaeval Antiquities and Ethnography, appears with the most frequency. Theirs was a friendship that spanned the forty years of Scharf's career, and the surprising lack of known correspondence between the pair is perhaps explained by the regularity with which Franks is recorded as visiting Scharf at home - and vice versa - or being present at meetings of the Society of Antiquaries and other social occasions.<sup>104</sup> Appointed to the department of Antiquities in 1851, Franks spent the next 45 years avidly acquiring objects for the collections, dramatically enriching the holdings of mediaeval and later antiquities of all descriptions and increasing the amount of ethnographic material tenfold.<sup>105</sup> When not sourcing objects abroad, he was an almost constant fixture at Scharf's London dinner parties, especially when living above the Christy Collection at nearby Victoria Street from 1865.<sup>106</sup> In many ways Franks was a similar man: a bachelor, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (later director and president), a member of the Athenaeum Club, personally unassuming but sociable and well liked, with a wide circle of friends and a formidable reputation for scholarship.<sup>107</sup> Franks matched Scharf in his dedication to research

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Institution Catalogues for works on Rembrandt[sic] and a selection of my SB sketchbooks brought expressly from the offices'; NPG7/3/1/48, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, George Scharf, personal diary 15 Nov. 89, 29 Jun. 1890 and 5 Jan. 1891, NPG7/3/1/46–8, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>104</sup> See Marjorie Caygill, 'Franks and the British Museum - the Cuckoo in the Nest' in Marjorie Caygill and John Cherry eds, *A.W. Franks: Nineteenth-Century Collecting and the British Museum*, London: British Museum Press, 1997, 93. Caygill presumes that Scharf initially became involved with Franks during their work for the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition in 1857, although the former is first recorded in Scharf's diary in 1855 as a fellow guest at the British Museum residence of Edward Hawkins; see George Scharf, personal diary, 18 Sep. 1855, NPG7/3/1/11, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>105</sup> On Franks's professional practice see Eloise Donnelly's article, in this issue. See also Alison Petch, 'Two Nineteenth-Century Collectors-Curators Compared and Contrasted: General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827–1900) and Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826–1897)', *Museum History Journal*, 7: 2, 1 Jul. 2014, 192.

<sup>106</sup> The banker and collector Henry Christy bequeathed his collection of ethnographic artifacts to the British Museum in 1865. As there was no spare room to exhibit this material at the Museum, the Trustees secured a suite of rooms at 103 Victoria Street (Christy's former home) for this purpose, and the collection was overseen by Franks before being transferred to the Museum in 1884.

<sup>107</sup> Franks (1826–97) and Scharf were near contemporaries. The former was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1853, a year after Scharf. Caygill asserts that learned societies were a central part of Franks's social and academic life, noting his particular devotion to the Antiquaries. He also had a reputation as a clubman, spending much time at the Athenaeum,

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and interpretation, the seriousness with which he undertook his role as a public servant and his diligent attitude towards his official responsibilities, not least the meticulous documentation of objects.<sup>108</sup>



Figure 7: Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks, by George Scharf, pencil, 1883, TSB 30, NPG7/1/3/1/2/26, p.56, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. © National Portrait Gallery, London

In 1875 Franks moved into one of the British Museum residences, which became a meeting point for various distinguished individuals who shared his interests: antiquaries, archaeologists, collectors, connoisseurs, ethnographers and museum people.<sup>109</sup> Franks was thus a conduit to an extended network of European professionals. Reciprocal invitations to dine or attend his ‘conversazioni’, provided Scharf with the further occasion to engage with a wide range of international colleagues, including Adriaan de Vries, keeper of engravings at the National Print Room in Amsterdam, Hugo von Tschudi of the Kaiser Friederich Museum in Berlin and Julius Lessing, the first director of Berlin’s decorative art museum.<sup>110</sup> Scharf also placed importance on his more low-key encounters with his friend and official counterpart. For example, he carefully recorded in his diary the details of a

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to which he was elected in 1857 with Scharf’s support for his candidature. Like Scharf, Franks never married. Caygill argues that he was ‘in many ways wedded to the Museum on which he lavished his time and money and which was his main beneficiary’; see Caygill, ‘Franks and the British Museum - the Cuckoo in the Nest’, 90–95.

<sup>108</sup> Such qualities were admired by Bode, who observed of Franks: ‘In his self-sacrificing activity, his simple and unassuming manner and his knowledge, this excellent man still stands as the unrivalled model of a museum director’; Bode, *Mein Leben*, 172. Whilst considering similarities between the Scharf and Franks, it is worth also registering the disparity in their social backgrounds. Born into a wealthy family, Franks was educated at Eton and Cambridge and did not rely on his government salary as Scharf did; Franks’s own private income allowed him to purchase objects outright for the Museum when he encountered them.

<sup>109</sup> These gatherings were almost entirely without women. David Wilson describes Franks as that Victorian product, ‘a man’s man’. Apart from his warm friendship with the collector and heiress Lady Charlotte Schreiber, his social relationships with women remain obscure; David Wilson, ‘Augustus Wollaston Franks - Towards a Portrait’ in Caygill and Cherry eds, *A.W. Franks*, 3.

<sup>110</sup> See George Scharf, personal diary, 5 May 1878; 28 Feb. 1879; and 11 Sep. 1884, NPG7/3/1/35–41, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

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weekend stay with Franks at the museum, illuminating a scene of quiet industry between two men at ease in one another's company: 'We breakfasted late, at 9.30, & wrote letters. Franks was arranging book plates; writing letters. We did not go out all day. I was copying engraved portraits from one old book of the Lynden family. We sat up chatting & looking at a German funny book the History of Ramsouitis till 1.30 (fig. 7)'.<sup>111</sup> Scharf's diaries hint at a relationship of informal professional exchange. He took an interest in display techniques employed by Franks at the British Museum - regularly visiting to investigate his fresh arrangements or 'new rooms' - whilst Franks would often consult Scharf and his collected resources on matters of scholarship.<sup>112</sup> Franks was appreciative of Scharf's scholarly generosity. Writing after Scharf's death in 1895, he recalled that 'aided by a good working library [Scharf] was most obliging in helping others, and all his friends could rely on his giving them some hint or suggestion which would be useful in their enquiries'.<sup>113</sup> The few extant letters from Scharf to Franks in the British Museum, illustrate a ready relaying of information. He was, for instance, keen to relate the fact that four enamel plates at Blenheim Palace corresponded exactly with an example collected by Franks at the museum, including in the letter two careful drawings of the coats of arms he found on the back.<sup>114</sup> By the 1890s, Franks would have been able to count upon Scharf's expertise in relation to a portrait in his own collection, when the latter confidently asserted: 'I have compared my sketch of your wax mask in the British Museum called Cromwell with the plaster one now offered to us and the well authenticated portraits of the Protector & I have no hesitation in expressing my utter disbelief in the mask in the museum having the smallest connection with Oliver Cromwell'.<sup>115</sup>

The artist Sir Frederic William Burton was a friend of similar longevity who, after his appointment as director of the National Gallery in 1874, also became an increasingly important professional associate. Succeeding William Boxall as the

<sup>111</sup> George Scharf, personal diary, 2 Sep. 1883, NPG7/3/1/40, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Eloise Donnelly in this issue illustrates an alternative lithograph portrait by George Scharf, showing himself, Franks and two other friends in the library at Ashley Place; see NPG6712. Scharf sketched this image on to a lithographic stone by gas light, one evening after dinner in January 1873.

<sup>112</sup> In return, Franks maintained an interest in the National Portrait Gallery's collection, for example attending various Sunday private views of the portraits at South Kensington between 1882-85; see NPG75/1/7, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>113</sup> Augustus Wollaston Franks, 'Presidential address', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 15, 1893-5, 379.

<sup>114</sup> George Scharf to Augustus Wollaston Franks [from Blenheim Palace], 3 Sep. 1862, Papers of Augustus Wollaston Franks, Britain, Europe and Prehistory, BM. For more information on this exchange see Eloise Donnelly's article, in this issue.

<sup>115</sup> George Scharf to Augustus Wollaston Franks, 12 Aug. 1890, Departmental Correspondence, Britain, Europe and Prehistory, BM. See sketch of the British Museum mask by Scharf, 12 Aug. 1890, SSB 122, NPG7/3/4/2/137, 4, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. This is SLMisc.2010, BM, which is still catalogued as Oliver Cromwell, although doubts have since been expressed about its identity. A plaster cast of the death mask was not acquired by the NPG at this time (see Register of Offers, 19 Jul. 1890, CXCI F4, NPG85/2/5, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

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third director of the Gallery, he was the last holder of the post to have executive power over the purchasing of art works.<sup>116</sup> During his twenty-years' tenure Burton was responsible for securing some of the most significant pictures in the collection, including Botticelli's *Venus and Mars* and Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks*.<sup>117</sup> Scharf knew him from the late 1850s, soon after his move from Dublin to London in 1858; it is likely the two first met during a gathering at the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>118</sup> Another regular attendee at Ashley Place, Burton participated freely in this energetic forum. On more than one occasion Burton and Franks were able to offer their particular expertise to the direct benefit of the National Portrait Gallery. In a letter to William Smith of 1876, Scharf noted their response to a potential acquisition brought home for further inspection: 'Both Mr Franks & Mr Burton have carefully examined the portrait of Henry 7<sup>th</sup> which has been offered to us, and they are highly in favour of our retaining it. Burton is especially pleased with it as a work of art & piece of colour'.<sup>119</sup> Burton and Scharf were close to the second Chairman of the National Portrait Gallery's Trustees Charles Stewart Hardinge, second Viscount Hardige of Lahore, who formed an official bridge between the two establishments, also serving as a Trustee on the National Gallery's Board. It was the personal bond between these men that translated into formal collaboration between the institutions, particularly in the case of the loan of some prestigious acquisitions to Trafalgar Square, when the National Portrait Gallery's collection moved from South Kensington to the Bethnal Green Museum.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> On Burton's career and the nature of his professional expertise see Eleanor Greer's article in this issue. Burton, unlike Scharf, had a reputation for being occasionally abrupt and impatient, though close friends saw through these foibles and he formed many close friendships. In a letter written towards the end of his life, Scharf describes Burton as a 'dear good constant friend'; see George Scharf to Austen Henry Layard, 29 Jun. 1894, Add MS 39100, f.320, BL.

<sup>117</sup> These were acquired by Burton amongst some more unusual pictures, including examples of early Sieneese painting, a series of commissioned copies after Old Masters in the Prado and two second-century AD burial portraits excavated from Hawara, Egypt, in 1888.

<sup>118</sup> In his youth, Burton was also a highly regarded scholar in the field of Irish antiquities and archaeology; see Marie Bourke, ed., *Frederic William Burton: For the Love of Art*, exhib. cat., Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 2017. Scharf supported his election as Fellow of the London Society of Antiquaries in 1863. See George Scharf, personal diary 16 Dec. 1859: 'Fredk. Burton, an artist & excellent fellow, staid[sic] last night till ¼ past 12 with me'; NPG7/3/1/16, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>119</sup> George Scharf to William Smith, 26 Feb. 1876, NPG20/3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. The portrait was subsequently purchased by the NPG Trustees [NPG 416]. On this exchange between Burton, Franks and Scharf see also Jacob Simon's article, in this issue.

<sup>120</sup> Frederic William Burton to Charles Stewart Hardinge, 19 Jul. 1885, NPG66/3/1/1, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. These two pictures were the group portraits: *The House of Commons 1793–94*, by Karl Anton Hickel [NPG 745] and *The Somerset House Conference, 1604*, by unknown artist [NPG 665].



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Figure 8: Charles Stewart Hardinge and Frederic William Burton (far right), sketch by George Scharf, in the 'Rock Garden' at South Park, Hardinge's home in Kent, 1882, SSB 104, NPG7/3/4/2/119, p.47, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. © National Portrait Gallery, London

This friendship triangle was to prove significant to Scharf throughout the second half of his career (fig. 8). The three would share information on potential acquisitions and liaise closely over pictures of mutual interest. In relation to the Blenheim Palace sale of 1886, Hardinge was anxious to ensure the course of action to be adopted by each institution was clear. Writing to Scharf following a trip to Christie's prior to the sale, he recounted seeing Burton there 'in a very uncertain frame of mind – we have I think £2000 left to spend on the Blenheim pictures. He is still rather sweet on the Gainsboro' [NPG 755] – I have told him that he must confer with you before the sale in order that we may not clash. He has promised to do so'.<sup>121</sup> A week later Burton wrote to reassure Hardinge that he and Scharf had agreed upon their strategy in the sale room: 'I had a talk with Scharf yesterday about next Saturday's sale. The only picture it appears we both want is the Gainsborough. But I have no desire to interfere with the N.P.G in this instance & Scharf & I have settled clearly our respective parts. If he fails to secure it for 400 guineas, & cannot go beyond that, I shall bid on a bit'.<sup>122</sup>

Scharf was able to offer specific help to Burton concerning the acquisition of Raphael's *Ansidi Madonna* altarpiece [NG 1171], purchased from the Marlborough collection in 1885. His private anxiety over the loss of the picture abroad perhaps set in place the chain of events necessary to secure it for the British nation. Writing to Burton on the matter as early as 1878, Scharf evidently considered his uncharacteristic indiscretion justified on this occasion and urged him: 'Do not lose sight of the Duke of Marlborough's Raphael. I valued it to his Grace at £20,000. He has enormous expenses and an extravagant wife who will sacrifice anything to maintain her native dignity. This is Confidential. I am afraid of Berlin public or private'.<sup>123</sup> Further correspondence confirms a casual reciprocity between Scharf

<sup>121</sup> Charles Stewart Hardinge to George Scharf, 20 Jul. 1886, NPG7/1/2/1/1/4, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>122</sup> Frederic William Burton to Charles Stuart Hardinge (copy), 28 Jul. 1886, NPG7/1/2/1/1/4, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. Presumably Burton is referring to Scharf's instructions to Agnew, who bid for the portrait of the Duke of Bedford by Thomas Gainsborough [NPG 755] on the NPG's behalf.

<sup>123</sup> George Scharf to Frederic William Burton, 22 Aug. 1878, NG68/1/15, National Gallery Archives. In mentioning 'Berlin', Scharf is probably referring in large part to Wilhelm von Bode. This picture and Van Dyck's *Equestrian Portrait of Charles I* [NG 1172] were purchased together from the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough by private treaty. Scharf's valuation is

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and Burton in relation to their daily professional undertakings. Most frequently they would alert one another to - and assist one another with - pictures of possible interest for respective collections.<sup>124</sup> Scharf advised directly on the high profile purchase of the so-called 'Longford Holbein' by the National Gallery in 1890;<sup>125</sup> his close knowledge of the collection at Longford Castle, consolidated whilst directing the Countess of Radnor in the compilation of her collection catalogue from 1889, was of particular value.<sup>126</sup> In return Burton included Scharf closely in the acquisition process and the subsequent restoration of the picture, which he recorded seeing newly conserved in his diary for May 1891.<sup>127</sup>

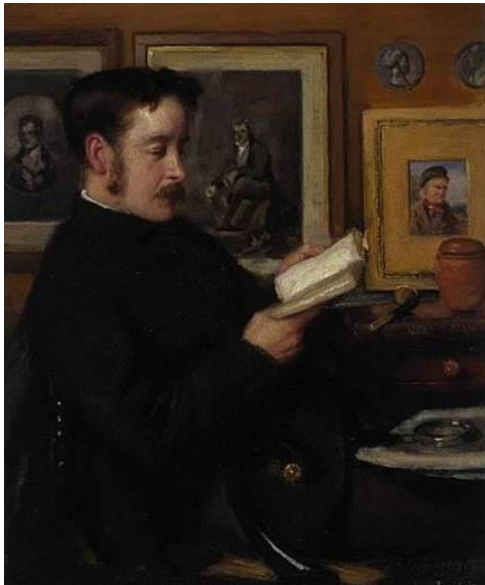


Figure 9: John Miller Gray, by Patrick William Adam, oil on canvas board, 1885, PG 1226. © Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh

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unreliable; elsewhere he reports valuing it to the Duke at £40,000. The painting eventually sold for £70,000.

<sup>124</sup> For example, in 1880, Burton draws Scharf's attention to a 'very faithful' portrait of 'our fine old friend' William Boxall in possession of art connoisseur Federico Sacchi; see Frederic William Burton to George Scharf, 3 Jan. 1880, RP 937, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. In 1890 he introduced Sacchi to Scharf and two years later the NPG Trustees purchased the picture [NPG 937]; see Susanna Avery-Quash and Silvia Davoli, "Boxall Is Interested Only in the Great Masters...Well, We'll See about That!": William Boxall, Federico Sacchi and Cremonese Art at the National Gallery', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 28: 2, 1 Jul. 2016, 10.

<sup>125</sup> See, for example, George Scharf, personal diary, 8 May 1890: 'Dinner Lady Layard...Burton & Sidney Colvin & Sir William Gregory there too...I had much conversation with Burton after dinner and with Colvin upon the Holbein at Longford'; NPG7/3/1/47, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. On the sale of the Holbein and two other pictures to the National Gallery at this date, see Amelia Smith, *Longford Castle: The Treasures and the Collectors*, London: Unicorn Press, 2017, 163–8.

<sup>126</sup> The final years of Scharf's diaries contain accounts of numerous trips to Longford Castle, for example: '...the great Holbein was taken down from the wall & placed on the floor at an angle. Copied the inscription & made careful notes'; George Scharf, personal diary, 25 Oct. 1889, NPG7/3/1/46, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>127</sup> See George Scharf, personal diary, 5 May 1891, NPG7/3/1/48, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

In the last 10 years of Scharf's career John Miller Gray, the first curator of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, figured with increasing significance in his social and professional circles (fig. 9). Already a prolific writer on art, Gray was appointed to the Gallery by the Board of Manufactures in 1884, where his job description was very similar to Scharf's despite the disparity in titles.<sup>128</sup> Whilst responsible for the cataloguing and display of the nascent collection across various temporary premises, Gray was also charged with sourcing and evaluating potential acquisitions. To this end he would make occasional trips to London, also taking the opportunity to visit Scharf at home and contribute to his lively gatherings.<sup>129</sup> In August 1887 Scharf stayed with Gray during a two-week research trip to Edinburgh, where he also inspected the progress of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's new building on Queen Street.<sup>130</sup> For the rest of the time they maintained an affectionate correspondence that reveals the informal nature of their professional co-dependency. Gray would ask Scharf to view Scottish and other portraits up for sale at Christie's and give his opinion long-distance as to their suitability for the Edinburgh institution.<sup>131</sup> After one such request Gray expressed his gratitude for Scharf's willing assistance as proxy researcher, and underlined his dependence upon an expert contact in the capital: 'I hope I am not trespassing quite unduly upon your time & kindness by all these enquiries, but we are very much isolated here, & have the greatest difficulty in getting reliable information as to what, in our way, is going on in London'.<sup>132</sup> Likewise, Gray assisted with Scharf's continuing research into pictures of Mary Queen of Scots, on one occasion visiting Holyrood Palace on request and reporting back with details of a portrait Scharf had studied there four years previously: 'My dear G.S, I took a run down to Holyrood this

<sup>128</sup> Although both portrait galleries took as their founding 'charters' Thomas Carlyle's famous 1854 letter on the value of portraits, the SNPG was not established until 1882 (as opposed to the NPG in 1856) and the two operated relatively independently. It was the relationship between Scharf and Gray that really formed a bridge between institutions, in the later decades of the nineteenth century.

<sup>129</sup> See George Scharf, personal diary, 20 Jan. 1889, 14 Jan. 1890 and 16 Jun. 1890: '[Sunday] J.M. Gray came, & then Lindsay & then Franks, lively supper' and 21 May 1893; NPG7/3/1/46-50, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>130</sup> Scharf spent time making notes and sketches of the SNPG's collection and gallery building; see SSB 114, NPG7/3/4/2/129, 60-3; and TSB 34, NPG7/1/3/1/2/30, 7-14, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>131</sup> See, for example, John Miller Gray to George Scharf, 27 Apr. 1886: '[on SNPG headed paper] Have you seen, or will you see the Scottish portraits, removed from Leslie House, which are to be sold at Christie's in Monday? If so, could you kindly telegraph me to 25 York Place, Edinburgh, whether they are worth coming up to see & whether I could probably expend £50 at the sale to the advantage of the above Gallery?'; letter pasted into Scharf's annotated Christie's catalogue, 3 May 1886, Scharf Library, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>132</sup> John Miller Gray to George Scharf (transcript), 9 Jul. 1886, NG7/4/1, National Records of Scotland.

morning – the eyes are of an amber-brown, getting lighter towards the pupils. The hair is a darker & richer shade of the same colour'.<sup>133</sup>

Gray recognized Scharf as his closest professional equivalent, yet far from a one-sided flow of advice from the more experienced of the two, it is clear that influence extended both ways. The inclusion of a letter from Gray in Scharf's 1884 edition of the National Portrait Gallery collection catalogue, bound with subsequent corrections, efficiently illustrates the reciprocal nature of their relationship: 'Will you pardon my enclosing a note of one or two things (very slight) that have caught my eye in going through your new catalogue. I know how gladly I would receive any such hints from you in my own case & I may presently have need for them when I send you a copy of our new catalogue in the proofs of which I am now immersed'.<sup>134</sup> Identifiable throughout the correspondence is both the strength of their friendship and the closeness of their scholarly interests; Gray's became increasingly antiquarian and historical as his career progressed. Although not established until 1882 the Scottish National Portrait Gallery moved into its purpose-built gallery before the London institution, in 1889, within which Gray's hang of the early collection was highly regarded.<sup>135</sup> In a published tribute following the younger man's untimely death in 1894 Scharf lamented the loss of his 'fellow-worker in the field of portraiture' and 'most genial companion', and noted his thwarted intention to call on Gray's skilled assistance in arranging the National Portrait Gallery's portraits at St Martin's Place, a task which still lay ahead. In praising here Gray's qualifications for and dedication to his curatorial role, Scharf could have been describing himself: 'Gray was devoted to History. He had a strong natural perception of form (an essential qualification for the identification of likeness), a quick memory, and indomitable energy and sagacity in penetrating the origin and groundwork of whatever came before him'.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>133</sup> See, for example, John Miller Gray to George Scharf, 20 Jul. 1892, NPG7/3/3/20/3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. This is a portrait on loan to Holyrood House Palace by the Duke of Hamilton, formerly thought to be a portrait of Mary Queen of Scots; ref. Lionel Cust, *Notes on the Authentic Portraits of Mary Queen of Scots: Based on the Researches of the Late Sir George Scharf: Rewritten in Light of New Information by Lionel Cust*, London: John Murray, 1903, 131–32 (29).

<sup>134</sup> John Miller Gray to George Scharf, 27 Apr. 1889, which concludes: 'Fear I shall not get to London this Spring – sad if I don't see you & your circle...[with page of suggested amendments relating to Scottish sitters also included]'; see George Scharf, *Historical and Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures, Busts, &c. in the National Portrait Gallery, Exhibition Road, South Kensington*, London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1884 [bound with cuttings and corrections for 1889 edition], Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>135</sup> James Lewis Caw, 'Gray, John Miller (1850–1894)', rev. Nicola Kalinsky, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11345>, accessed 24 Sep. 2017.

<sup>136</sup> George Scharf, 'The Late Mr. J.M. Gray', *The Athenaeum*, 16 Jun. 1894, 781.

### Conclusion: George Scharf as a museum professional

Despite his training as an artist, Scharf cannot easily be cast in the mould of the 'painter-connoisseur' director as ascribed by Andrea Geddes Poole to consecutive incumbents of the National Gallery's post during the nineteenth century. Rather, as already demonstrated, he is more closely aligned with the meticulous 'curator-scholar' model epitomised by Sidney Colvin and his followers at the British Museum, in the first decades of the twentieth century (fig. 10).<sup>137</sup> Whilst these men were university-educated, however, Scharf honed his expertise 'on the job' and in the direct service of the National Portrait Gallery. Halona Norton-Westbrook has noted the beginnings of professionalization amongst art museum officials in Britain towards the end of the 1800s, identifying this trend as a prelude to more formal



Figure 10: Sir George Scharf, by Ernest Edwards, albumen carte-de-visite, 1866, NPG Ax29985. ©National Portrait Gallery, London

<sup>137</sup> Geddes Poole, *Stewards of the Nation's Art*, 80. See also Alan Bell, 'Colvin versus Poynter: the directorship of the National Gallery, 1892–1894', *The Connoisseur*, 190: 766, Dec. 1975, 278–83; and Giles Waterfield, *The People's Galleries: Art Museums and Exhibitions in Britain, 1800–1914*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015, 17–18. Despite Geddes Poole's assertion, it is clear that not all of the National Gallery's nineteenth-century artist directors can be so readily defined. Charles Eastlake and Frederic Burton, in particular, implemented a scholarly approach to the role; see articles by Elena Greer and Susanna Avery-Quash and Corina Meyer, in this issue.

developments in the sector during the following century, and using as an example Scharf's efforts to implement standards of identification and documentation.<sup>138</sup> In this article I go further and contend that Scharf's innovations (and those of his colleagues) are evidence of the fact that this shift towards professionalization occurred earlier than Norton-Westbrook suggests, at least from the 1850s onwards. It is reflected notably in Scharf's formulation of standardized procedures for the National Portrait Gallery and his promotion of best practice in portraiture research, over the course of his long career.<sup>139</sup> This transition occurred within a phase of wider occupational rationalization and reform. Philippa Levine writes of a 'dynamic of professionalization' that coloured developments during the second half of the nineteenth century, with many new middle class professions emerging at mid century alongside the expansion of the three established professions of law, divinity and medicine.<sup>140</sup> In his examination of the rise of the professional classes in nineteenth-century Britain, William Joseph Reader asserts that by the close of the century, the standing of the professions had been raised and consolidated, noting the 'rich complexity' of Victorian professional classes displayed in the census reports of 1861 and 1881.<sup>141</sup> Within each, codes of conduct and notions of professional etiquette were steadily developed; in the museum sector this emphasis was formalized through the establishment of the Museums Association in 1889.<sup>142</sup>

But how may Scharf be characterized as a professional man? In her analogous examination of the rise of painting as a profession in the nineteenth century, Paula Gillett charts a revolutionary change to the social status of artists from the 1860s, crediting a large part of their success to the 'exemplification by painters of one belief central to the Victorian ethos, that a person's moral worth is shown in unswerving and unremitting industry in his chosen field of work'.<sup>143</sup> This 'religion of work' came in fact to be the actual faith of many individuals, during a period of significant

<sup>138</sup> See Halona Norton-Westbrook, *Between The 'Collection Museum' and The University: The Rise of the Connoisseur-Scholar and the Evolution of Art Museum Curatorial Practice, 1900–1940*, PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2013, 53. Norton-Westbrook also cites Vera Zolberg's definition of this period in late nineteenth-century museums as the 'Pre-professional' era (40).

<sup>139</sup> In the National Gallery this new emphasis was officially articulated through the reconstitution of the Gallery in 1855, where the old order in place since its foundation was replaced with a new directorship established with professional staff, and rigorous purchase and display policies (with thanks to Susanna Avery-Quash for underlining this point, Feb. 2018).

<sup>140</sup> Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians, and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838–1886*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 124.

<sup>141</sup> William Joseph Reader, *Professional Men: The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth Century England*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966, 146.

<sup>142</sup> On the Museums Association see Geoffrey Lewis, *For Instruction and Recreation: A Centenary History of the Museums Association*, London: Quillier Press, 1989. I have not found any evidence of Scharf's involvement with the association, either its establishment in 1889 or as an early member.

<sup>143</sup> Paula Gillett, *The Victorian Painter's World*, Gloucester: Sutton, 1990, 28.

religious doubt and increasing secularisation.<sup>144</sup> Tim Barringer examines at length the potency of the concept of work during the 1800s, considering the 'redemptive potential' of labour (both manual and intellectual) and its association with divine revelation.<sup>145</sup> Certainly Scharf was a keen adherent to the Victorian gospel of work. As evidenced in this article, his dedication to his role is unquestionable. There remained little distinction between official and leisure time, even after he ceased to live directly above the Gallery in Westminster, from 1870. Scharf would habitually work on after office hours at Ashley Place; sitting up late to devise picture labels, revise a new edition of the collection catalogue, refine his sketches and tracings, or write-up the minutes from a Trustees' meeting. His diaries reveal that even Sunday breakfast times were reserved for the piecemeal reading of the Earl of Clarendon's *The history of the rebellion and civil wars in England*. His note for 23 January 1881 concluded a series of related entries: 'Finished reading the History of Clarendon in 6 volumes to my great pleasure & instruction. I had long intended to undertake the work, but found that by confining it to Sunday morning at breakfast I could make it a habit & so keep to it. I succeeded very well'.<sup>146</sup> Here and throughout this article I intend to illustrate the extent to which Scharf spent time working out of hours for the good of the National Portrait Gallery, and it is worth stressing that the same attitude concerning best practice governed his actions in both his professional and private life, the latter largely forming an extension of his activities in the public sphere.

In a letter of 1864 to Philip Stanhope, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Stanhope, the first Chairman of National Portrait Gallery Trustees, Scharf recalled his initial surprise at the level of commitment his post demanded: 'I little foresaw how completely the duties, both directly and indirectly connected with the Gallery, would absorb my time and attention. I had fully expected to find leisure in the evening to complete works of artistic importance in which I was already engaged, and which I afterwards found myself compelled to relinquish one by one in favour of the Portrait Gallery interest'.<sup>147</sup> In later years Scharf would refer to this simply as his 'absorption by portraiture'.<sup>148</sup> In short, his work was all encompassing, and his unmarried state facilitated this level of dedication. As far as he would admit to himself, marriage was a distraction; his letters and diaries hint at private irritation each time a friend announced his engagement or, as joked about amongst his inner circle, deserted 'the

<sup>144</sup> See Walter Edwards Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957, 251.

<sup>145</sup> Timothy John Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005, 27–74.

<sup>146</sup> George Scharf, personal diary, 23 Jan. 1881, NPG7/3/1/38, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.

<sup>147</sup> Official letter from George Scharf to Philip Stanhope, 20 Jun. 1864 (printed copy), NPG20/2, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG. This likely included an uncompleted project Scharf termed his 'Chronology of Art', on which he worked extensively during the early 1860s and planned to publish with William Longman (see George Scharf, personal diaries, 16 Dec. 1862 and 31 Dec. 1863; NPG7/3/1/19 and 21, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG).

<sup>148</sup> George Scharf to Wilhelm von Bode, 2 Apr. 1882, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, IV/NL Bode 4777 (Scharf, George)



noble order of bachelors'.<sup>149</sup> This perhaps also goes some way to account for the strength of his sense of obligation to the Institution and to the Trustees, which remained constant for the length of his career. Scharf was first and foremost a public servant, conforming to the other central facet of the professional classes identified by Gillett, which centred on thoughtfulness, unselfishness and self-discipline.<sup>150</sup> It was a distinctly moral dimension to which individuals could aspire in the act of self-definition: 'The professional man's devotion to the goal of serving society was held to differentiate him from the crude, crass, and socially irresponsible businessman supposedly motivated by self-interest and greed'.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, in his investigation of emerging professionalism in industrial society, Philip Elliott identifies characteristic values including 'a belief in the principle of payment in order to work rather than working for pay and the superiority of the motive of service'.<sup>152</sup> This attitude applies directly to Scharf, whose occasional and reluctant appeals to the government for an increase to his modest salary, came only when he felt this prevented him carrying out responsibilities to the best of his ability. The seriousness with which Scharf took his position as a government official was manifested in his diligent approach to each aspect of his role. This dedication shaped the very outlook of the Institution; Scharf's impulsive practice of recording and cross-referencing every picture he encountered remains at the core of work undertaken by staff in the National Portrait Gallery's Heinz Archive and Library.

Yet throughout this article, far from asserting Scharf's uniqueness, I have attempted to position him within a network of like-minded individuals with whom he engaged in a culture of shared expertise, ideas and information. This give and take mentality is neatly illustrated through the nature of Scharf's interactions with Gray, Burton and Franks. Though each man was committed to the specificities of his role, in working together these figures also helped develop a wider model for art historical research, institutional collecting and professional museum practice in Britain during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>153</sup> I further propose that Scharf and his colleagues were united by both a profound personal interest in

<sup>149</sup> See William Frederick Beauford to George Scharf, 23 Sep. 1872 (NPG7/3/5/1/1, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG), who continues: '...Franks's little adventure is quite romantic. I hope his attack of the "blues" is not so bad that we shall have to celebrate another desertion before long'. In his autobiography, Bode claimed that Scharf stayed young by remaining unmarried, finding his life's work in the creation of a portrait collection of 'famous English men'; Bode, *Mein Leben*, 163.

<sup>150</sup> Gillett, *The Victorian Painter's World*, 36.

<sup>151</sup> Gillett, *The Victorian Painter's World*, 36.

<sup>152</sup> Philip Ross Courtney Elliott, *The Sociology of the Professions*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1972, 52. Terence Richard Gourvish defines this phenomenon simply as an 'ideology of service'; see Terence Richard Gourvish and Alan O'Day eds, *Later Victorian Britain, 1867–1900*, London: Macmillan Education, 1988, 17.

<sup>153</sup> Unfortunately these individuals were largely all men. In her recent work, Kate Hill explores the difficulties experienced by women who tried to pursue traditionally 'masculine' careers in science and curatorship during the nineteenth century, and assesses the wider contribution made by women to the museum sphere; see Kate Hill, *Women and Museums, 1850–1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.

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respective fields of research and an adherence to the principles of industry and service, which so defined the professional classes during the Victorian period. Indeed, Gertrude Prescott Nuding maintains that Scharf 'epitomised the Smilesian principles of duty and industry' as popularized by social reformer Samuel Smiles in his handbooks titled, among others, *Self-Help* (1859) and *Duty* (1880).<sup>154</sup> I concur, but argue that it was this dual impulse that steered Scharf's professionalism. It was in this sense that reading Clarendon over Sunday breakfast at once constituted work and private enjoyment. Scharf recognized this duality and in a letter to William Smith of 1859, he efficiently articulated an outlook that would endure: 'My dear Smith, many thanks for the communications you last sent me and for the loan of the Hanoverian volumes. I am delighted with them and read them "in mingled spirit" of duty and pleasure'.<sup>155</sup> I argue that these two factors motivated Scharf and his associates who, by capitalizing upon the potential for knowledge-exchange and collaboration that membership of clubs and learned bodies had long fostered, together carved out the very tenets of their profession.

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<sup>154</sup> Gertrude Prescott Nuding, 'Portraits for the Nation', *History Today*, 39, Jun. 1989, 36. On Smiles see also Asa Briggs, 'Samuel Smiles and the Gospel of Work' in *Victorian People*, rev. edn., London: Folio Society, 1996, 97–117.

<sup>155</sup> George Scharf to William Smith, 10 Aug. 1859, NPG20/3, Heinz Archive and Library, NPG.