Edinburgh Research Explorer

Things to know before beginning, or

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Things to Know before Beginning, or: Why Provenance Matters in the Library

If you are in a library, looking at a book, what do you really need to know about its beginnings? Do you need to know how, or why, it arrived in its current location? Many readers do, of course, engage in some form of provenance research – whether because they are explicitly interested in a past owner, or in copy-specific material aspects like annotations or other readers' marks. Libraries, museums and archives, too, are all involved in provenance studies, which usually takes the form of establishing a book or object's line of descent to the collection in which it is currently found by considering its history of acquisition and transmission, its appearance in sale catalogues, and its cost. Yet, despite the fact that provenance is – rightly – considered a field of its own, there is a lack of theorisation about the bigger questions which this research can raise.[1]Using as a case study Hans Sloane's collection of Prints and Drawings, I argue in this article that the study of provenance has wider import than has been previously recognised – that the ways in which things have been presented and catalogued in the past continue to shape them today. What is more, I show how expanding the question of provenance so that it encompasses not simply an object's origins but also an analysis of its historical curation opens up theoretical questions regarding cataloguing, materiality and taxonomy. Once we begin to question the decisions that have led to an object being currently located in a library as opposed to a museum, the resulting divisions between ontological categories – such as 'image', 'book' and 'object' – become both troubled and troubling. Rather than being somehow inherent, rational decisions, they are revealed to be historically contingent ones which nevertheless produced the institutional categories we know and work within today.

Beginning with the question of how Sloane catalogued his prints, I explore the ways that the identities of museum and library objects were created and have continued to change over time, focussing especially on how objects' presentations – framed as opposed to kept in albums, coloured prints or uncoloured ones – affected their categorisation. By then thinking more generally about the ways that paper objects do and do not fit into the library, I argue that both provenance and classification should be treated as paratextual features when approaching any item. Although these organisational decisions don't physically affect the object or book in question, they do shape the way it appears in the world. If the role of the paratext to an item is, in Genette's words, to 'surround it and prolong it, precisely in order to present it, in the usual sense of this verb, but also in its strongest meaning: to make it present, to assure its presence in the world, its "reception" and consumption, in the form, nowadays at least, of a book', cataloguing cannot be anything else.[2] The questions it can raise might disturb

assumptions about what is being looked at: what if it *wasn't* always a book? And is something still a book if it's been taken apart?

One of the founding collections of the British Museum, and hence also the British Library, was that of Hans Sloane (1660-1753).[3] A physician, botanist, and prodigious collector, Sloane sold his vast collection to the nation upon his death. Its contents were recorded in several catalogues, including an eight-volume library catalogue – which lists over 40,000 printed books, 5,000 manuscripts, and other library objects – and a seven-volume catalogue of 'miscellanies' subdivided into various categories. Prints and drawings appear in both of these: some were considered to belong to his library, whilst others weren't. Tracing the classification of these once they passed into the hands of the nation can be complicated; provenance information has often been lost at the level of individual items due to a history of institutional categorisations and rearrangements. From the opening of the BM in January 1759 until a series of thefts in February 1807, most of the items now found in the Department of Prints and Drawings were considered to be part of the Department of Printed Books. Once these were officially separated, several stages of rearranging followed, spanning almost two centuries. The guiding principle from the point of view of the BM was, and remains, organisation by the artist (when known): as Antony Griffiths writes, 'it was always regarded as self-evident that all drawings would be kept under the name of the draughtsman … in the print collection the problem was whether items should be kept under the name of their engraver or designer'.[4] Over this period, then, it was not uncommon for albums of prints and drawings to be both figuratively and literally taken apart, dispersed, and rearranged, 'in order to integrate their contents' into the wider institutional structure.[5] As a result, some of them remain in the BM, whilst others are to be found in the BL. This disrupted history means that Sloane's prints and drawings provide an ideal case study for demonstrating what can be gained if we refuse to take at face value the location of an object today.

Sloane's categories and the problems of classification

From around 1705 until his death in 1753, pictorial items within Sloane's library were assigned one of two identities: 'Miniatura' (which had a shelfmark beginning 'Min') or 'Prints' ('Pr').[6] This was not in itself unusual: rigorous distinctions between images and books were not yet the norm within collections.[7] Sloane was not therefore an outsider in terms of his practice, but the huge scale of the collection allows its contradictions to be deeply thought through. Whilst the prints formed a fairly stable category, the 'miniatura' were varied, encompassing 'every item [Sloane] owned that contained illuminated pages, drawings or hand-coloured prints'.[8] This was not a category related to size, but one preoccupied with colour. It was this attribute which took precedence over the form and content of the item. So, for example, a bound album of engraved prints would be given a Pr. shelfmark – but if the *same* album included a print which had at some point been coloured in, it would be categorised as a 'Min' item instead.

Using the term 'Miniatura' in order to place emphasis on colour was a revealing decision on Sloane's part. Although, as early as 1586, the *OED* records the sense of

'miniature' that we are probably most familiar with today, 'something that is a smaller or reduced version of an original' (sense 1), this is a meaning with a false etymology, arising from a confusion with the Latin *minus* or *minor*. The word properly stems from the verb *miniare* ('to colour red with cinnabar', thus also 'to rubricate'), and it came to English via Italy.[9] Katherine Coombs has identified a treatise written by Edward Norgate around 1627 as the first point at which 'the Italian word "miniature" was used as an unequivocal equivalent to "limning"'; she also notes that 'one or two uses of the word "miniature" can be found in the English language in the late 16th century.'[10]

These dates offer a conflicting story. It seems obvious how the broader category of 'illuminated matter or work' (*OED* sense 6) could have evolved towards the miniature as 'a portrait executed on a small scale and with minute finish' (sense 5b), and thus to the description of 'the art or process of painting miniatures' (sense 5a). Once this association between the miniature as a small painting was established, the false echo of 'minus' might well have led to the use of miniature as simply a small object, in the way we understand it today. However, going by the current earliest identified citations for each use, this straightforward narrative of the evolution of vocabulary does not seem to have been the case. Although etymologically-related terms were in use in post-classical Latin and Italian from at least the mid-fourteenth century, the English word miniature only appears to have been really established by the mid-seventeenth century. This therefore places it directly alongside the rise of the early-Enlightenment collecting culture which was to be inherited by Sloane. Perhaps unsurprisingly, John Evelyn provides the earliest examples given by the *OED* of two senses of the word.[11] Although, as Coombs shows, these attributions should be taken with a pinch of salt when it comes to coinage – I am not claiming that Evelyn himself coined these words – it suggests that a cultural shift was taking place at this time.[12] After all, illuminated manuscripts had been around for centuries but this language to describe them was new.[13]

Rather than separating out text and image, the word 'miniature' suggests that illustrated items are indivisible wholes, a new emphasis which may have resulted from the development of print. If illumination was the specific act of illustrating manuscripts, print opened up space for a broader category: one which could position both printed and illustrated books alongside rubricated manuscripts. This was more than a simple question of aesthetics. Whether or not something was coloured had long been a metaphorically aligned characteristic: as early as 1430, Lydgate was writing that 'he enlumineth by craft and cadence, / This noble storye with many freshe coloure / Of Rethorik', demonstrating how the word used for illustrated manuscripts already carried a second, figurative meaning: to light up, to enlighten, to throw sense upon (in addition, of course, to the idea of rhetoric as *ornatus*, or adornment).[14] Colour had always been important, but the result of creating a new category of *noun* which hinged directly on this – the miniature, as opposed to the merely adjectivally illuminated manuscript – was that it was no longer a linguistically supplemental feature. Put simply, a miniature *needs* colour in order to exist: a manuscript may not be decorated, a book may not be illustrated, but a miniature is always coloured. Sloane's decision to categorise items accordingly simply reflected and reinforced this view. However, the result of his assiduous classifying is that some of the distinctions drawn between a print and a

miniature within his collection – or the library catalogue and the miscellaneous one – might now seem arbitrary. The fault line between the 'Pr' and 'Min' categories in Sloane's library meant that copies of the same item could fall into different classifications. Over his collecting life, with the creation of several sub-categories, prints, drawings, maps and other miscellaneous illustrated material all became steadily more and more differentiated within the overarching scheme of Sloane's library organisation, even if all those things had initially been indistinguishable from printed books.[15] This had a material impact – they would be stored separately on the shelves – but it also raises a more conceptual problem. If categorical distinctions rest on things which can be so easily rearranged, how much weight can they possibly hold?

Whilst the prints and miniatures occupied the library, Sloane's 'drawings and pictures in frames' were recorded within a catalogue of their own, known simply as 'Pictures &c'. This lists what might be termed generally pictorial pieces. As well as including oil paintings and drawings (a term which includes work done in pencil, lead, crayon, watercolours, and gouache), there are mosaics, prints, engraved stones, and embroidery.[16] Some of the objects may not even have been primarily two dimensional: several 'bustos' are listed, and although some of these are given as 'delin.' (for delineated), proving that they were in fact drawings of busts, several others are not; their descriptions can be suggestively matched up to three-dimensional metal busts still found in the British Museum today.[17] My interest here is primarily in the prints and drawings – why were some listed in the library and some not? – but these other things also offer insight into Sloane's process of categorisation. What was it that made some prints belong with paintings, but others with books? Where is the line? There was not necessarily always a clear functional divide between the categories in the first place. As Kim Sloan puts it:

when looked at in greater detail, the 'pictures' prove to be concerned not only with oil paintings but to be closely related to the albums of drawings, and indeed also to Sloane's large collection of prints, for Sloane used all his pictorial collections for reference just as he did the natural history specimens and the books in his library. The pictures and drawings in frames were carefully selected to form a visual reminder and representation of the vast contents of his collection stored in cabinets and books that could not readily be seen by visitors … his collection of drawings was a working collection that was not merely complementary to his encyclopaedic collection but was integral to it; like the specimens themselves, it was constantly being re-organised, catalogued, listed and identified.**[18]**

If all the objects were used similarly, might it not be the case that it was the *frames* which functioned as one of the defining distinctions being drawn between 'pictures in frames', and pictures in (library) albums? Contemporary images of early modern shelving, in both libraries and studies, repeatedly show framed items displayed on the walls or shelves, above or alongside the books, and this is still the case today.[19] Does putting something in a frame change it, moving it towards an art object and away from whatever it might have been before? John Ruskin believed so: he wrote that 'the frame was made before the picture'.[20] Rayna Kalas, however, argues that this

is a Romanticist judgement, and that to retrospectively apply it to a late-Renaissance collection (such as Sloane's) would be anachronistic. She writes that Ruskin's

valorization of the frame inadvertently reveals the extent to which the framed painting has defined the very idea of the work of art.

The aesthetic judgement of painting is predicated on a frame that functions as an aperture: as something that is largely insignificant as a thing unto itself but that is critical in setting apart what is viewed through it. Aesthetics disavows the material frame, deeming it extrinsic to the beautiful object, even as it relies on a concept of the frame as that which distinguishes and delimits the concept of the beautiful. Aesthetics, it might be said, gives the idea of the work of art its conceptual frame. **[21]**

Kalas relies on the fact that the word 'frame' in the Renaissance carried 'a *poietic* sensibility, just as the modern frame would later come to be inflected by a visual concept': that 'the alienable quadrilateral frame was a Renaissance invention. But the idea of the frame as a conceptual structure that demarcates the work of art is a product of eighteenth-century aesthetics.'[22] However, although Ruskin's comment does proudly and undeniably display his Romantic sensibilities, Kalas' conclusion that the framed item was therefore *not*conceptually demarcated in the Renaissance seems at best difficult, and at worst simply wrong. It is clear from his catalogues that Sloane, at least, was treating his framed items as somehow ontologically different, regardless of whether or not they then went on to be used alongside or for the same purposes, from his unframed ones. If the frame was a device which had the potential to elevate a library object (a print or drawing) into something else – for the sake of brevity, let us call it a work of art – then it was also something which threatened the stability and categorisation of that library. How can you delimit something when the simple addition of a frame has the power to transgress those limitations? This is an instance of the metamorphic library object, capable of being changed by its location and situation – its framing in the most metaphorical sense – from a library object into something else. The resulting use of two separate catalogues to contain materially similar pictures suggests that there was a recognised tension on Sloane's part between his attempt to order the items as a structured and self-contained microcosm, reflective of the natural order of God's earth – the traditional understanding of the intentions behind early modern collections, as James Delbourgo, among others, would have it – and the fact that he and his amanuenses in fact had the power to make decisions which would in turn determine the identity, meaning and definition of an item.[23] To frame or not to frame; to place in a bound album in the library or to keep separate? What is at stake in these dilemmas was not simply aesthetics but the very identity of the object, alongside an authoritative statement over where it belongs. Moreover, their legacy lingers: these decisions helped change where things ended up.

We might be forgiven for assuming that it was Sloane's second category of 'pictures and drawings in frames' which provided the objects later claimed by the BM, whilst the unframed miniatures and albums of drawings remained in the BL with the books. Such

a division would have been fairly sensible and self-explanatory. It is not, of course, that easy. Although, as Antony Griffiths explained, 'the distinction, in principle, between the two collections [was] that if a volume contains letterpress it is a book (and thus for the Library), while if it does not it is a collection of plates (and for this Department) in practice the post-acquisition division of Sloane's items was troubled from the start.'[124] We always have definitions and guidelines; the reality never quite follows them. Felicity Myrone has recently put it succinctly: 'In general, the prints and drawings collections have been perceived as divided up between the British Museum and the British Library according to whether the images were valued as autonomous 'art' or formed supporting 'evidence' for largely text-based research. But these divisions have hazy origins and have never been clear cut.'[125] As a result of all this haziness, the provenance of individual items has often been lost. The information we have often seems a product of chance rather than deliberation: albums of prints came to Prints and Drawings through the BM Department of Printed Books, which meant that 'there is no record of their arrangement before the inventory of 1837 by which time they had been reorganized and incorporated with [other collections].'[126] However, the majority of the drawings took a different route before ending up in the same place: they originated in the Department of Manuscripts, meaning that they were recorded in a separate catalogue before being broken up.

Happily for the hypothetical researcher with whom I began this paper, there are (usually) ways to think about the provenance of items such as these without delving deep into the catalogues. Some bear physical marks which gesture towards their previous locations. Certain drawings which are now found in bound albums in the BM, or which were bound upon coming in to the Museum and later disbound, still show the traces of the frames in which Sloane displayed them.[127] However, even in these cases, there is nothing in their current presentation which reveals that these drawings were originally considered inherently different to those which Sloane had kept in albums in his library.[128] Two pictures can be by the same artist, cover similar topics, and occupy the same current location – and yet, when we relocate them within Sloane's original cataloguing system, it is revealed that some belonged to his library and some did not. My question now is simply what to do with this fact. Answering this takes the form of three examples from Sloane's collection, all of which illuminate a different aspect of how looking into classification histories can unsettle and change our interpretation.

Rijksmuseum Library, Amsterdam

John Locke's removed drawings, and institutional reorganisation

An example of ethnographic drawings currently found in the BL starkly demonstrates the importance of being aware of the way that cataloguing decisions made by former owners has affected something's current institutional location. This collection comprises 26 ethnographic drawings which were initially made for John Locke before being given to William Courten and then, eventually, acquired by Sloane. They are now kept at the BL in an album of '77 single-page watercolour drawings'. This album, however – along with many others – has had individual drawings removed from it over the years, some of which can now be found in the British Museum's Department of Asia, having first passed through their Department of Prints and Drawings.[29]Mariana de Campos Françozo has described the treatment of the drawings within this album in a way which might almost act as a microcosm of the Sloane collection as a whole: 'Specialists have either dedicated a few sentences or a couple of pages to the description of the album or have used some of its folios as illustrations, assuming their belonging to the Locke series … without further questioning', she writes.[30] This assumption of where something belongs is shown to be misleading, since it ignores the album's history both pre- and post-Sloane. Only through a careful visual analysis and comparison

between the drawings which remain within the album and those which were removed to the BM can Françozo determine which are and which are not from the Locke series: work that researchers unconcerned with provenance issues have not carried out.[31]

The drawings in this album portray various indigenous peoples, mostly Asian, with a particularly strong emphasis on their clothing; in and of themselves, it is not surprising that some should have ended up in what is now the Department of Asia. However, what Françozo's work also shows – despite her reluctance to overtly say as much – is the great extent to which it is arbitrary coincidence as much as any library curator's active determination which has kept the Locke drawings together. The removed images she examines could have easily belonged to that series and it is sheer chance that they did not; they could just have plausibly once been part of another series, which had less prestigious names attached and which has therefore been lost within the swathes of Sloane's vast collection. We may never know. Institutional practice means that pasted drawings in albums such as these cannot be examined in order to see any writing which may exist underneath, and through the processes of conservation other provenance information (if it ever existed) has very probably been lost. Regardless, the meaning of this example is clear: the current position of a given print or drawing does not immediately tell us much, if anything, about either its placement or categorisation within Sloane's collection. Just because something is now in the Museum, that is, does not mean that it wasn't ever in the Library.

This is not, of course, to demean the nature or importance of the arbitrary; nor is it to overlook the relationship between the arbitrary and the practical. It is quite obviously more practical to store things kept as books in the library along with the other things kept as books; this is an issue of space, access and use, as well as aesthetics and organisation. The reality is that, when imposing any sort of intellectual or ideological system on obstinately physical items, the librarian must be prepared to give way. This is true regardless of the size of the library collection and is not limited to a specific historical period. Samuel Pepys arranged his (c3000) books by size and even had custom-made wooden blocks to stand each book on so that the tops would be level. In his case, it appears that the library system – the cataloguing and organisation of books – grew out of material concerns rather than the other way around. Margaret Willes reports that

in the summer of 1666, finding that his books were 'growing numerous, and lying one upon another on my chairs, [Pepys] commissioned Thomas Simpson … to make up for him two bookcases in oak to his designs. … Each press held about 250 books, with folios at the bottom, and octavo and quarto volumes ingeniously stepped on some of the other shelves to maximise the space. Once the bookcases were acquired, Pepys drew up an alphabet and a few months later, a catalogue or shelf-list.**[32]**

Pepys assiduously kept his library to a constrained size, donating duplicate copies and items that didn't fit the shelves to the newly opened Bodleian. On the other side of the spectrum when it comes to space, the University Library in Cambridge today still uses

a more or less totally idiosyncratic shelving system for its (approximately) nine million items, within which a well-acquainted reader can accurately foretell the size of the book they are looking for from its shelfmark alone. These are merely two examples which show how practical decisions are made – as they have always been – based on the size and weight of an object as well as the space available and the intentions behind the organisation. However well planned out a bookshelf is, it will never be good enough.[133]

We can see this problem behind Sloane's creation of the Miniatura and Prints categories in the first place. The decision to create these new sub-categories for the library seems to have arisen primarily from his acquisition of Courten's entire collection. 'Antony Griffiths has hypothesised that Sloane's collection of a new print classification in about 1705 arose from his sorting out of Courten's large collection of prints, and something similar seems to have occurred with the drawings', as Carol Gibson-Wood put it.[134] Courten's collection was not excessively large but it was nevertheless big enough to have substantially altered the makeup of Sloane's library at the time: the practical demands which would have arisen when attempting to incorporate the two collections offer a convincing reason for Sloane's decision at this point to reorder.

The Flower-Garden display'd, and reading images

Another example models the second reason why understanding the provenance of a previous cataloguing system ought to matter to researchers today: here, former cataloguing decisions offer a revised reading of a book. The book in question is Sloane's second edition of a printed work titled *The Flower-Garden display'd,* now found at BL 441.d.20.[135] Although predominantly textual, it is resplendently decorated with several lavish copperplate engravings detailing a different flower arrangement for each month of the year. These engravings have been painted with watercolours, thereby accounting for the fact that Sloane categorised it as a miniature rather than a printed book. The colours are in fact integral to the book – the text makes frequent references to them as a way of identifying individual plants – something which suggests that this painting may have been done in some copies prior to their initial purchase rather than by the owners (as was often the case).[136] Regardless of when they were coloured, it was clearly the engravings rather than the text which was the main selling point of the book.[137] They are there to demonstrate the outcomes of flower arranging, and offer an idea of what such arrangements might look like; to this end, each engraving is numbered and provided with a key. However, the way the flowers are drawn suggests that it was less a manual which had been written for use than the title suggests. Distinguishing between individual plants is hard to do; they are not easy to identify. Each engraving, despite taking up a full large-sized 4º sheet, is crowded with around 30 different flowers, and the specific details of each are lost in the arranging. However impressive they are, then, the images are not enough to offer identification in and of themselves – nor are they intended to be. In this respect at least, they remain supplementary to the text, which is highly descriptive:

June. Number 1. Perennial Dwarf Sun-Flower. This plant came to us from Carolina, and is a lasting Plant in the Garden. It brings a good Number of Flowers, radiated like other

Sun-Flowers, in a Star-like manner; The Flower-Leaves are of a bright Yellow, and the middle Thrum of the Flower black. This plant is increas'd by parting the Roots in February and March, or in September or October. It delights in an open free Ground.**[38]**

Despite the book's internal relationships – the images need the text to be of use beyond being simply aesthetic, whereas the text could continue to function alone – Sloane's decision to categorise the book as he did meant that, in some sense, the images were in fact being prioritised over the text. It is worth pausing over that statement since the idea of prioritisation, and the implicit suggestion of a value hierarchy which it carries, is something which must play out within a given arena: if the images are being prioritised, they must be being done so in respect to something else.

Admittedly, of course, *The Flower-Garden display'd* was not changed in any physical way by being categorised as it was, but it was placed in an intellectual system of categorisation that as a result not only lent emphasis to certain aspects but also accordingly de-emphasised others – in this case, its textuality. This cataloguing decision reveals where early modern readers placed their priority when approaching the book; it offers, if not exactly a new reading of the text, at least a revised understanding of where its value might have been, guiding us firmly away from a text-centric approach. Moreover, the prioritisation inherent in the 'Min' shelfmark not only affected the way the book was treated and positioned within Sloane's library – taking up shelf space alongside volumes of prints – but it has also continued to shape the way that the object is treated, kept, and catalogued today. To take this book purely as a printed text – which would be easy to do since, as I have shown, the pictures by themselves are impractical, whilst the text is copious and descriptive – now necessitates not only disregarding Sloane's category but then also *justifying* that disregarding, even if only to yourself. This is only the case, of course, for a reader who knows what Sloane's shelfmark means: it is in this sense that provenance acts as a contextual, paratextual framework of interpretation rather than an essential one. As soon as you know what the shelfmark means, you are unable to unknow it, and the object is changed. By making the decision to describe the book as a 'Min', therefore, Sloane changed it. But not always, and not for everyone. It might be more accurate to say he set in motion the potential for it to be changed.

Paper and the library

Paper seems to function both materially and metaphorically as a determining feature when it comes to what does or does not belong to the library. It is therefore necessary to begin with the caveat that just as not all paper is a library object, neither are all library objects, materially speaking, paper. We know this, of course: even setting aside the leather and metal of the bindings, the pages within Sloane's library (taken to mean the surface upon which things were written) were also made up variously of paper, vellum, parchment, and other materials. Arnold Hunt comments on the collection:

Even in its present state it is clear that the boundaries between the manuscripts and other parts of the collection were fairly porous: the manuscript collection includes prepared

samples of elephant tissue (Sloane MS 3916), a palm-leaf book from Ceylon (Sloane MS 1399) and a birch-bark book from Newfoundland (Sloane MS 2373), which seem to have ended up with the manuscripts because it was more convenient to shelve them as bound objects.**[39]**

Convenience, again, raises its head; however, there is a sense here, too, that purpose and material are somehow at odds. 'Porous' is a particularly double-edged adjective: on one hand, it suggests fluidity and a moving between categories, but on the other, it is a damnation of the whole attempted business of cataloguing in the first place. If categories are 'porous', then things can move both ways. If the boundaries between book and manuscript, manuscript and specimen, book and art object, are porous, then what can decisively be said about any of them? Are we to have no definitive answers at all?

With the exception of the elephant tissue, which is found as a specimen within a vellum manuscript, all the examples mentioned by Hunt are aligned with paper. Sloane's birch-bark and palm-leaf books are treated by the library as manuscripts because of the purpose to which their material was put: because they were bound and written on as books. It is possible to apply this more broadly to the relationship between papyrus, vellum, and paper, all of which we have been happy to accept as material which is functionally the same for the purposes of defining a library, regardless of the physical differences between them. In terms of both general use and of Sloane's cataloguing practice, there is no corresponding anxiety or need to distinguish vellum from paper to match the separation of book and manuscript.[40] When it comes to the ways that paper is conceptualized both within and outside of the library, the boundaries have always been porous.

Traditional analytical bibliography, of the school of Philip Gaskell and Thomas G. Tanselle, has used paper as a material tool which can provide evidence for the dating, provenance, and history of individual books.[41] Allan Stevenson's 'Paper as Bibliographic Evidence' provides a clear account of some of the ways that this might take place: identifying the stock of paper through examination of watermarks and chain lines, for example, can reveal information about where it might have been made, its quality (and therefore potential cost), and help narrow down the dates of production.[42] In specific cases, therefore, the analysis of paper can be used to help identify an individual printer or even author. A recent, spectacular, example is John-Mark Philo's identification of the previously anonymous translator of the Lambeth Palace manuscript of Tacitus' *Annales* as Elizabeth I, based in part on a close examination of the paper stock.[43] Building on this careful and detail-oriented work, however, scholars have recently begun to turn to a different approach, one which involves theorizing the way that paper was understood, used, and especially reused in the early modern period. A 2019 conference on the 'Histories, Theories, and Uses of Waste Paper in Early Modern England' exemplified this trend whilst several forthcoming books promise to solidify it.[44]

In this vein, then, the idea of 'paper' stands not only for something both bibliographically and materially specific but also a theoretically expansive category primarily defined by its relation to use as a writing surface – in which case it might not necessarily be paper at all. The former sense is perhaps best defined, adapting the *OED* definition to be relevant to the early modern period, as 'material in the form of thin, flexible sheets used for writing, printing, or drawing on… usually made from wood pulp [or hemp and flax rags] which [are] dried, pressed, and generally bleached'.[145] The second sense, however, reveals how 'paper' has become a synecdoche for a material category that in fact incorporates other writing materials, such as vellum, parchment, papyrus, as well as – if we are to expand it both chronologically and geographically – bone, clay, slate, stone, wax and plastic.[146] The problem with the sort of work I have been doing so far in thinking about the ways that paper objects do and do not fit into the library, specifically as manifested through prints and drawings, is that my use of 'paper' as something which is (at least sometimes) cognate to library objects in fact moves between these two different meanings of the word. That is, the categorisation of prints and drawings as 'Min' or within the 'Pictures &c' catalogue frustrates the idea that they should both be understood as library objects given their shared materiality. They are both made of paper. According to modern taxonomy, there should also be a distinction between things which Sloane did not seem to distinguish between, such as the drawings of a bust and the bust itself. However, the implicit understanding which lies, at least in part, behind this desire for all Sloane's drawings to be catalogued in the same place and as the same things – as well as the anxiety and confusion that has institutionally arisen from the fact that this was simply not the case – comes from an elision of the paper object with the metaphorical idea of paper. If a library is, in the simplest terms, a place for books, it is also a place for paper; anything which refuses that distinction also unsettles the relationship between paper and writing, despite the fact that that is a conceptual relationship rather than a material one.

The tensions I have exposed which can be perceived within Sloane's own system – and which remain present in the way his items are presented today – can now be seen as in fact arising from the fluctuation between these separate ideas of paper. This, finally, is why the frame was something which exerted such power so as to remove something from the realm of the library. Framing something is a physical intervention but it is also a conceptual one. It makes something different, by making something different. The material and the theoretical here come together in a question not only of provenance in its closed, most traditional sense, but with everything it implies about the way objects have shifted – and continue to shift – between classifications, categories and institutions. There is still a certain arbitrariness in our categorisation of these materials, one which has had a prolonged impact on the scholarship they produce. Moreover, there is an attendant anxiety about the ability to successfully delineate these categories: the feeling lingers that there *is* – or at least should be – an essential difference between a framed print and a bound one, a print kept in the British Library and now in the British Museum. Where this difference resides, and the precise manner in which it manifests, however, is harder to articulate. What is a library book? What is a book at all? Perhaps these questions might grow productively if, rather than *worrying* over distinctions, we ask instead what their very messiness might tell us.

Rijksmuseum Library, Amsterdam

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[1] This field of inquiry is developing as a growing body of scholars start to think differently about materiality in general. For a recent overview of the methods of this sort of work on provenance, see David Pearson, *Provenance Research in Book History: A Handbook*(Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2019), which covers an impressive array of British sources; for an example of this 'new provenance' work in action see Jason Scott-Warren, *Shakespeare's First Reader: the Paper Trails of Richard Stonley* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

[2] Gérard Genette, 'Introduction to the Paratext', trans. by Marie Maclean, *New Literary History*, 22.2 (Spring 1991), 261-72 (p. 261).

[3] Henceforth referred to as the BM and BL respectively.

[4] Anthony Griffiths, *Landmarks in Print Collecting: Connoisseurs and donors at the British Museum since 1753* (London: The British Museum Press, 1996), p. 7. For a selected bibliography on the history of the collections see A. E. Popham, 'Sir Hans Sloane's Collections in the Print Room', *The British Museum Quarterly*, 18.1 (March 1953), 10-14; John Rowlands, 'Prints and Drawings', in *Sir Hans Sloane: Collector, Scientist, Antiquary, Founding Father of the British Museum,* ed. by Arthur MacGregor (London: The British Museum Press, 1995), pp. 245-62; Kim Sloan, 'Sloane's "Pictures and Drawings in Frames" and "Books of Miniature & Painting, Designs, &c."', in *From Books to Bezoars*, ed. by Alison Walker, Arthur MacGregor and Michael Hunter (London: The British Library, 2012), pp. 168-89.

[5] Antony Griffiths and Reginald Williams, *The Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: User's Guide* (London: British Museum Publications, 1987), p. 8.

[6] See Griffiths, *Landmarks in Print Collecting,* p. 22.

[7] See for example *Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge*, ed. by Robert Latham and others, 7 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981-89), III (1994).

[8] Sloan, 'Sloane's "Pictures in frames" and "books of miniature"', p. 184.

[9] See Patrick Maxwell, 'Miniature', *Notes and Queries*, Series 9, Vol. XII (November 1903), 425.

[10] Katherine Coombs, '"A Kind of Gentle Painting": Limning in 16th-Century England', in *European Visions: American Voices*, ed. by Kim Sloan (London: British Museum Press, 2009), pp. 77-84 (p. 78).

[11] *OED* senses 5a and 6, which respectively refer to the miniature paintings and the decorated manuscript.

[12] For an exploration into the general history of the *OED*'s compilation, see the 'Examining the *OED*' project at <**https://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/about/aims-and-findings/**> [accessed 21 June 2020]

[13] 'Miniature' predates 'illuminate' – the first recorded use of which is from 1706 – but there had been the medieval 'enlumine', as in the c.1366 quote from Chaucer 'Kalendeeres enlumyned ben þei'. (Although presented as separate words in the *OED*, 'enlumine' is clearly an etymologic precursor to 'illuminate'.) Quote taken from the *OED* entry 'enlumine, v.', sense 4.

[14] Quote taken from the *OED* entry 'enlumine, v.', sense 4. I am grateful to David Colclough for pointing me in the direction of the 'colours of rhetoric' trope as referring to rhetoric more generally, and the act of strengthening an argument with commonplaces specifically, especially in its use by Francis Bacon, in 'Of the Colours of Good and Evil' (see *The Major Works*, ed. by Brian Vickers, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; repr. 2008), pp. 81-101).

[15] This creation of sub-categories went on throughout Sloane's life: later on, he would categorise his Japanese and Chinese material as 'prints orientals'. However, importantly, they remained within the larger scope of the library catalogues. See Griffiths, *Landmarks in Print Collecting*, p. 22.

[16] Some examples: Item 6 is 'A bird upon a pear tree branch in Mosaic or inlaid work bought of Mr. Pinfold. He had formerly had it of Mr. Courten at sh. d 1 .5.0 I paid him – – – – 1. 10. 0.'; '18. A prospect of Badminton. a print.'; '33. A piece of Florence Stone with ruines & Lapis Lazuli.' All transcriptions have been taken from the following: *Sir Hans Sloane's Miscellanea which comprises his catalogues of Miscellanies, Antiquities, Seals, Pictures, Mathematical Instruments, Agate Handles and Agate Cups, Bottles, Spoons*, digital edition ed by. Kim Sloan, Alexandra Ortolja-

Baird, Julianne Nyhan, Victoria Pickering and Martha Fleming (2019) <**https://enlightenmentarchitectures.reconstructingsloane.org/cataloguemiscellanies/index.html**> [accessed 21 June 2020]. I am grateful to Felicity Myrone and Kim Sloan for their time discussing the various meanings of the terms 'drawing' and 'painting' with me.

[17] For example, the bust now with the BM registration number SLPictures.191 can be identified in the pictures catalogue as '191. A busto of Xerxes in brasse guilt'.

[18] Sloan, 'Sloane's '"Pictures in frames" and "books of miniature"', p. 168; p. 186.

[19] For more examples, see Dora Thornton, *The Scholar in his Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1997).

[20] John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin,* ed. by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1906), vol. 22, p. 337.

[21] Rayna Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 6.

[22] Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse*, p. 5; p. 4.

[23] See James Delbourgo, *Collecting the World: The Life and Curiosity of Hans Sloane* (London: Penguin Random House, 2017), pp. 258-302.

[24] Griffiths and Williams, *The Department of Prints and Drawings,* p. 5.

[25] Felicity Myrone, 'Prints and Drawings at the British Museum and British Library', *Picturing Places* blog <**https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/prints-and-drawings-at-the-british-museum-and-british-library**> [accessed 7 March 2020] (paragraph 3).

[26] Griffiths and Williams, *The Department of Prints and Drawings*, p. 165.

[27] At some point, the 'in frames' of the 'Pictures &c' catalogue's manuscript title was deleted, although we don't know for certain whether this was done before or (more likely) after Sloane's death, or who might have been responsible.

[28] See Sloan, 'Sloane's "Pictures in frames" and "books of miniature"', p. 181.

[29] The album can now be found at the BL under shelfmark Add MS 5253. Its description is taken from Mariana de Campos Françozo, '"Inhabitants of rustic parts of the world": John Locke's collection of drawings and the Dutch Empire in ethnographic types', *History and Anthropology,* 28:3 (2017), 349-74 (p. 351). The two

removed drawings now in the BM Department of Asia can be found under the inventory numbers 1913,0620,0.1 and1913,0620,0.2.

[30] de Campos Françozo, 349-74 (p. 350).

[31] For example, she has concluded that drawings 74 and 78 – which were removed from the album and transferred to the sub-department of Prints and Drawings on 20 June 1913 – were not from the Locke series.

[32] Margaret Willes, *Reading Matters: Five centuries of discovering books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 51.

[33] It is important to note here that practicalities are not the only unstated reasons behind shelving decisions, and that a more critical interrogation can be rewarding. See Melissa Adler, *Cruising the Library: Perversities in the Organisation of Knowledge* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017) for an exploration of the way state power manifested itself through the Library of Congress shelving system and how 'by viewing texts as belonging to bodies of literature, we can theorise library subjects as we do human subjects and subjectivities and consider the ways in which they are constituted in indexing processes' p. xii.

[34] Carol Gibson-Wood, 'Classification and Value in a Seventeenth-Century Museum: William Courten's collection', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 9.1 (1997), 61-77, (p. 71).

[35] *The Flower-Garden display'd [...] The second edition. To which is added, A Flower-Garden for Gentlemen and Ladies; being the art of raising flowers [...] to blow [...] in the depth of winter [...] as it is now practised by Sir Thomas More, Bart* (London: R. Montagu, etc, 1734).

[36] Of the two other copies of this book now in the BL, that at 448.g.8. has coloured engravings whilst that at 1486.ff.18. remains uncoloured.

[37] For instance, the title page boasts of the book containing 'Four hundred curious representations of the most beautiful flowers; Regularly dispos'd in the respective months of their blossom, curiosly engrav'd on copper-plates from the designs of Mr. Furber, and others, and coloured to the life' sig. A1r.

[38]*The Flower-Garden display'd,* sig. H1r.

[39] Arnold Hunt, 'Sloane as a Collector of Manuscripts', in *From Books to Bezoars*, ed. by Alison Walker, Arthur MacGregor and Michael Hunter (London: The British Library, 2012), pp. 190-207 (p. 191).

[40] It is worth pointing out that modern public libraries too contain not only printed books, but also offer audiobooks and eBook rentals, as well as – in some cases – other objects to rent such as cooking equipment, board games, and computer equipment. See, for example, Rosa Adams, 'Brooklyn Public Library to Begin Lending Board Games', *Brooklyn Paper,* 2 December 2019 <**https://www.brooklynpaper.com/library-to-lend-board-games/**> [Accessed 7 March 2020]; Suffolk County Council, 'Borrowing eReaders and iPads' <**https://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk/help/borrowing-ereaders-and-ipads/**> [Accessed 7 March 2020].

[41] Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1995; repr. 2007); G. Thomas Tanselle, *Bibliographical Analysis: A Historical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[42] Allan Stevenson, 'Paper as Bibliographic Evidence', *The Library* series 5, 17.3 (1962), 197-212.

[43] John-Mark Philo, 'Elizabeth I's Translation of Tacitus: Lambeth Palace Library, MS 683', *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 71.298 (2020), 44–73.

[44] 'Histories, Theories, and Uses of Waste Paper in Early Modern England', 15 June 2019, Balliol College, University of Oxford. Forthcoming books include those by Anna Reynolds and Tamara Atkin.

[45] Sense 1a. For more information about the construction and variation of early modern paper, see Timothy Barrett, 'European Papermaking Techniques 1300-1800' in *Paper Through Time: Nondestructive Analysis of 14th– through 19th Century Papers* [online] University of Iowa <**http://paper.lib.uiowa.edu/european.php**> [Accessed 7 March 2020].

[46] Although wax tablets in particular continued to be produced and used through the Renaissance. See Don C. Skemer and Ted Stanley, 'The history and technology of a Renaissance erasable notebook (ca. 1575) in the Old World and New', *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, 38:1 (2015), 14-26.