of this bibliography problematic, forcing a reader to examine multiple sections in order to be comprehensive, but the bibliography is already dated (there are no entries post 1998). Although Tennyson does not state that database software was used to generate the bibliography, the whole file could be taken by an institution like his academic home, Cape Breton University, and placed on the web as a searchable database for the benefit of a wider audience. This bibliography deserves that sort of treatment.

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Colin G.C. Tite. *The Early Records of Sir Robert Cotton's Library: Formation, Cataloguing, Use*. London: British Library, 2003. xvii, 297 pp.; \$120.00. ISBN: 0712348247.

Sir Robert Cotton (1571–1631) is best remembered for his celebrated library, whose shelf-marks are still denoted by imperial Roman busts that surmounted its bookcases. Cotton began collecting medieval manuscripts, charters, coins, and other artefacts as a young student of William Camden, whom he accompanied on one of that great antiquarian's wide-ranging tours of northern England, and with whom he helped form the original Society of Antiquaries, a learned forum that flourished in late Elizabethan London. Members of this circle petitioned the Crown for the establishment of a formal academy, in which Cotton's library would be merged with the Queen's own to form a national collection, a proposal which bore belated fruit in the eighteenth century. Less well known is Cotton's long career as a courtier and parliamentarian. He proposed the creation, under the royal prerogative, of the order of baronets to augment royal revenues, and in 1611 was one of the first to purchase one of these hereditary knighthoods. Cotton's knowledge of legal and parliamentary precedent, corroborated by documents in his large collection, from which he made loans freely available, earned him stature in the work of both the Royal Court and Parliament. His loyal support of the Stuart succession notwithstanding, his erudite counsel was less welcome during the early and capricious reign of Charles I. Increasingly embarrassed by historical precedents marshalled against him, in 1629 the King ordered Cotton's library closed, and imprisoned him briefly.

Treasures among Cotton's manuscripts such as the Lindisfarne Gospels (MS. Nero D.iv), Beowulf (MS. Vitellius A.xv), Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (MS. Nero A.x), and hundreds of other decorated or illuminated medieval manuscripts are famous objects of both public and scholarly attention. But Cotton also collected early modern printed books, as well as charters, state papers, and correspondence sufficient to fill 200 bound volumes, without which our knowledge of earlier British history would be much the poorer.

Cotton's career as antiquarian, collector, and politician has been thoroughly described in studies by scholars such as Kevin Sharp and Christopher Wright. Largely ignored until now, however, are the contemporary records of Cotton's library, which consist of handwritten catalogues, loans lists of borrowers, and assorted memoranda and extracts made by readers. That only one of the seven bound volumes of these sources remains in the Cotton collection – the rest are distributed between London, Oxford, and Cambridge – and that no printed catalogue of Cotton's manuscripts has appeared since Thomas Smith's in 1802, provides some plausible excuse for this scholarly neglect. Now, however, following 30 years' diligent labour, Colin Tite has reproduced all of these loans lists and memoranda in a single volume, followed by a list of Cottonian catalogue entries, listed in the emperor series, "compiled to bring together loans lists and memoranda records, catalogue descriptions and other references," complete with numerous cross references. Finally, the volume is augmented with a series of "annexes" covering such things as items unidentified by pressmarks in the loans lists and catalogues; lists of manuscripts bearing tables of contents, fore-edge titles, or title pages; and Cotton's bindings and binding instructions.

The information contained in the entries of Cotton's manuscripts and (some few) printed books includes pressmarks, signatures, and other evidence of prior ownership, and perhaps most interesting of all, records of loans to various borrowers. Because many of Cotton's manuscripts were later bound together, or rebound in the course of restoration after two disastrous fires in 1731 and 1865, these loans records must be interpreted with caution. The 270 distinct records of loans and acquisitions nonetheless reveal a fascinating pattern of use – 43 volumes were out on loan in August 1615, while 125 separate loans were recorded during 1621 – by such luminaries as William Camden, William Dugdale, Symonds D'Ewes, Roger Dodsworth, William Lambarde, James Ussher, Augustine Vincent, James Ware, and John Selden, who also served as the library's guardian during

the Civil War and Commonwealth eras, after which it was restored to Sir Robert's heirs.

The author has diligently searched the Cotton family correspondence, as well as library catalogues of other early collectors, in search of evidence of the provenance of Cotton's many acquisitions. Acknowledgements of Cotton's generous assistance with sources and research, as well as citations from works in his collection, appear in a number of books written by his friends and contemporaries, and Tite has traced and recorded many of these, a task facilitated by the names of borrowers and dates in the lists of loans. Cotton signed many of his books and dated some, but these are too few and temporally ambiguous to establish any dates or patterns in the rate by which the collection grew. One must, however, assume that his acquisitions spiked when Cotton's service on government commissions and parliamentary committees gave him access to state papers, and when the deaths of other collectors threw their collections on the marketplace. And, as Cotton was generous with loans and sometimes gifts to others – Tite records a number of manuscripts that went missing from Cotton's library – so, too, was he given books by friends and colleagues, such as in 1626 when Cotton and Symonds D'Ewes, another enthusiastic collector, staged a large, mutual exchange of manuscripts.

The author's painstaking and time-consuming labours have unearthed and duly recorded a wealth of bibliographical and biographical data, conveniently indexed and cross-referenced, that serve to illuminate not merely the history of a celebrated library, but also the dynamics of an influential personal network in the scholarly, intellectual, and political life of England in the late Tudor and early Stuart eras.

MERRILL DISTAD
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Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote, eds. *The London Book Trade: Topographies of Print in the Metropolis from the Sixteenth Century*. New Castle, Del. and London: Oak Knoll Press and The British Library, 2003. xvi, 185 pp.; US \$39.95 / UK £25.00. ISBN 1584561327 (US); 0712348328 (UK).

The towers and spires of London have, since Caxton set up shop in the Tudor period, looked down on an increasing complexity of