



Lambeth Palace Library
Research Guide

Library Records 1610-1785
Part A



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Catalogues, Shelf Marks and other Evidence for the History of the Collection 1610-1785

From its foundation in 1610 Lambeth Palace Library has been dedicated for public use. It remained nevertheless, until the nineteenth-century, in the ownership, and under the personal direction, of the Archbishop of Canterbury, its fortunes fluctuating according to the interests and commitments of each successive Archbishop. Whereas the history of other libraries may be written from continuous institutional records such as the minutes of governing committees, the correspondence and papers of the Archbishops (with a few exceptions) have scarcely survived for the centuries before Victorian era, being regarded as each Archbishop's personal possession to be disposed of, or destroyed, at will. Accordingly no records may be found at Lambeth of the appointments of its early Librarians, or of decisions which changed the structure or arrangement of the Library. These must be sought elsewhere, often from clues to be found in the books themselves and in catalogues of the collection surviving at Lambeth and in other repositories. The present guide aims to gather together this scattered evidence from which the history of the Library may be discerned.

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1. The Library Founded by Archbishop Bancroft

Archbishop Richard Bancroft (d. 1610) founded the Library through the bequest of his collection to his successors, the Archbishops of Canterbury, for ever. The collection was housed in a gallery around four sides of a cloister court at Lambeth Palace. The catalogue of 1612 shows the disposition of the collection. On the West side were bibles and biblical commentaries, patristics, Protestant works of controversy, Catholic and Protestant biblical commentaries, Hebrew commentaries, and Catholic works of controversy. On the South side were sermons and homilies, scholastic writers, canon, civil and common law, and literature.



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The East side housed historical works. On the North side were the manuscripts, Catholic liturgy, Protestant liturgy, Puritan works, further Catholic works, and dictionaries. Each subject class was divided by size (folios, quartos, octavos and sextodecimos). Ann Cox-Johnson (p. 108) counted the number of volumes in the Bancroft catalogue as 6065.

Catalogue:

LR/F/1 and LR/F/2. Two copies of the same catalogue, compiled on the initiative of Archbishop George Abbot in 1612 and both signed by him. The catalogue was to serve as a permanent record of the contents of the collection for the purpose of security. Although described as a catalogue, it is strictly a shelf list. Hence, where several works are bound together, only the first appears in the catalogue, being all that was needed for checking that the volume remained present in the collection. See the Lambeth Palace Library online catalogue of archives and manuscripts for full description.

Physical Evidence:

Evidence of the physical arrangement of the Bancroft books has largely disappeared, but still survives in a number of the octavos and smaller printed books. These were mostly shelved with the foredge outwards. A vellum label pasted to the inner side of the front board extended across the foredge and was tucked into the rear board. On the label was written the author and title and an abbreviation denoting the subject class in which the book was found. For example Pr for Protestant books, Pp [? Popish or Papist] for Catholic books, Co for commentaries, Hu for literature (*libri humanioris literaturae*) etc. In most Bancroft printed books the labels have disappeared, but paste marks are often visible.



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Bancroft books with labels. Modern shelf marks 1550.2, 1553.07, 1573.2, 1573.02

In the case of vellum books of reasonable thickness, the spine offered an alternative writing surface on which to record the author, title, and subject class. These books were shelved amongst the others but with the spine outwards.



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Armorial binding of Archbishop Bancroft. Shelf mark 1609.23

Other Bancroft books bear his initials RB on the covers, sometimes in plain bold letters, sometimes in smaller letters to either side of a decorative centrepiece. Surprisingly, these RB bindings do not all pre-date Bancroft's consecration as a bishop, and are even found on a book published in 1610, the year of his death.



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Bancroft binding with initials RB. Shelf mark 1610.2

Many books owned by Bancroft have armorial bindings or other features reflecting previous ownership. Of these, the most common are bindings displaying the arms of John Whitgift, Bancroft's predecessor as Archbishop of Canterbury. On the provenances of Bancroft's books see James P. Carley, 'A great gatherer-together of books'. Archbishop Bancroft's library at Lambeth (1610) and its sources'.



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Armorial binding of Archbishop Whitgift. Shelf mark 1604.22

Bibliography:

ODNB article on Bancroft with further bibliography.

James P. Carley, '“A great gatherer-together of books”. Archbishop Bancroft's library at Lambeth (1610) and its sources', in *Lambeth Palace Library Annual Review*, 2001, pp. 51-64.

James P. Carley, '“Accurately and exquisitely made”: George Abbot's preface to the 1612 catalogue of Lambeth Palace Library', in *From the Reformation to the Permissive Society: A Miscellany in Celebration of the 400th Anniversary of Lambeth Palace Library*, ed. Melanie Barber and Stephen Taylor with Gabriel Sewell (Church of England Record Society Volume 18, 2010), pp. 43-62.



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- M.R. James, 'Lambeth Palace Library', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, vol. 3, 1959-63, pp. 1-31.
- Ann Cox-Johnson, 'Lambeth Palace Library 1610-1664', in *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, vol. 2, 1954-58, pp. 105-26.
- Richard Palmer, 'In the steps of Sir Thomas Bodley: the libraries of Lambeth Palace and Sion College in the seventeenth century', in *Lambeth Palace Library Annual Review*, 2006, pp. 53-67.
- Richard Palmer, 'Lambeth Palace Library and its collections', in *Lambeth Palace Library: Treasures from the Collections of the Archbishops of Canterbury*, ed. Richard Palmer and Michelle P. Brown (2010), pp. 9-25.
- Joseph L. Black (ed), *The Martin Marprelate tracts, a modernized and annotated version* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

2. The Collection of Archbishop Abbot

Archbishop George Abbot (d. 1633) was responsible for establishing Lambeth Palace Library in accordance with the will of Richard Bancroft. In his preface to the Bancroft catalogue, written in 1612, Abbot declared his intention to give his own books (both those already in his possession and others to be acquired later) to Lambeth Palace Library.

Abbot's will, written in 1632 and proved in 1633, shows that in his lifetime he had placed his books 'in the great study or library at Lambeth' alongside those of Bancroft, distinguished however by his initials G. C. [George Cantuar]. See Arthur Onslow, *The life of Dr. George Abbot ...* (Guildford, 1777), pp. 60-3. These he bequeathed to Lambeth Palace Library.

An analysis of the Abbot catalogue shows that the Abbot books were disposed around the four sides of the cloister (West, South, East and North) at Lambeth in keeping with the subject arrangement of the Bancroft books. Cox-Johnson argued that Abbot books were interfiled with those of Bancroft. This is possible and gives point to the distinguishing initials G.C. . The Bancroft and Abbot books were certainly in one series, arranged by subjects, when surveyed in 1647 (see below on the 1647 catalogue). Nevertheless the Abbot catalogue makes no reference to any subject classification. Rather the Abbot books are recorded by size, and within each size, by the side of the cloister (West, South, East and North) in which they were placed. Ann Cox-Johnson (p. 108) counted the number of volumes in the Abbot catalogue as 2667.

Catalogue:

LR/F/3 and LR/F/4. Two copies of the same catalogue, compiled by William Baker in accordance with the instruction to him in Abbot's will proved in 1633. See the Lambeth Palace Library online catalogue of archives and manuscripts for full description.

Physical Evidence:

The Abbot books were shelved in the same manner as those of Bancroft. They were mostly



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shelved with the foredge outwards. A vellum label pasted to the inner side of the front board



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extended across the foredge and was tucked into the rear board. On the label was written the author and title and the initials G.C.. The labels do not record subject classification as found in the Bancroft books.



Abbot books with labels. Modern shelf marks 1608.26, 1631.12, 1609.28, 1609.32

In the case of vellum books of reasonable thickness, the spine offered an alternative writing surface to record the author, title, and initials G.C.. These books were shelved amongst the others but with the spine outwards.



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Abbot books with titles on the spine. Modern shelf marks 1624.53, 1625.18, 1633.12, 1609.24

Armorial bindings. On many of his books Abbot employed four stamps displaying his arms as Archbishop of Canterbury, ie. the arms of the See of Canterbury impaling those of Abbot (a chevron between three pears). The stamps are 98x 80mm., 77 x 72mm., 69 x 54mm., and 51 x 44mm. See the British Armorial Bindings database.



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The arms of Archbishop Abbot. Shelf mark 1617.16

Bibliography:

ODNB article on Abbot with further bibliography.

James P. Carley, '“Accurately and exquisitely made”: George Abbot's preface to the 1612 catalogue of Lambeth Palace Library', in *From the Reformation to the Permissive Society: A Miscellany in Celebration of the 400th Anniversary of Lambeth Palace Library*, ed. Melanie Barber and Stephen Taylor with Gabriel Sewell (Church of England Record Society Volume 18, 2010), pp. 43-62.

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