Abstract

This thesis investigates the donation of books made by Alexander Thistlethwayte (1718–1771), a Hampshire grandee and bibliophile, to the Fellows’ Library of Winchester College, the oldest of the English public schools. The first two chapters demonstrate the largely untapped potential of two unique books in the Thistlethwayte benefaction to advance scholarly understanding of topics relating to the copying and transmission of early modern literary texts. The second part of the thesis examines the collecting habits which shaped the physical configuration of Thistlethwayte’s books and the contents of his library. Chapter Three rediscovers the role of the anthology in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cultures of compilation, through a comparison of Sammelbände assembled by Thistlethwayte with those that he acquired from an Oxford graduate of the 1690s. Chapter Four traces the growth of Thistlethwayte’s library in the context of his life as a gentleman, taking in evidence from Thistlethwayte’s later donation of books to his alma mater, Wadham College, Oxford. The thesis concludes by reflecting on the conditions of access to the Fellows’ Library from which this doctoral project has benefited, and considers ways of extending the benefits of access and community engagement to scholars and the wider public.

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