

The Evan Bedford Library of Cardiology and its Catalogue

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The history of doctors' private book collections was recently detailed by Thornton (1949) and started as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; the majority disappeared upon the death of the collector and no lists remain. These were purely working libraries initially, but true collections soon evolved. Francis Bernard, physician to James I, left nearly 15 000 books that were sold by auction. Both these early and later collections were of a catholic nature as illustrated by that of Sir Hans Sloane, which included botanical and zoological specimens, coins, medals, and crystals, together with 40 000 volumes devoted to medicine and many other topics. The first medical library to be catalogued in a readable form was that of Sir William Osler: '*Bibliotheca Osleriana*', classified and indexed by the author employing formats of his own aimed at helping the reader and researcher. This general catalogue is now a standard reference as is that of his disciple Harvey Cushing who was, however, more selective in his collecting. Apart from such references derived from private libraries, the current general check list that is most frequently quoted, is the annotated Medical Bibliography initiated by Garrison of the surgeon general's library, and subsequently revised by Morton in London in 1943 and 1954. This lists some 6800 works of outstanding importance in all branches of medicine. Thus book and auction catalogues refer to numbered items in Osler, Cushing, or Garrison and Morton.

Now a fourth source will doubtless be referred to by scholars and bibliographers: The Evan Bedford Library of Cardiology: catalogue of books, pamphlets and journals. This title reflects the specialised nature of his collection, but modestly fails to indicate the comprehensive nature of the library. Thus it will serve the cardiologist, historian or bibliophile as Garrison and Morton provide for the general medical collector. Apart from publishing

this most erudite but readable catalogue, Evan Bedford, being the true collector that he was, preserved his library intact and had most generously presented it to the Royal College of Physicians, where it is available to any interested reader.

This collection has been acquired over many years and from several countries, so that its 1112 items form the most comprehensive cardiologist reference source in Great Britain, if not in Europe. Sadly there will be few successors in this field of collecting as book prices have escalated quite outrageously. Bedford bought *Withering* for £4; recently it fetched four figures at auction. Of particular value to the scholar are the many off-prints and bound journals containing notable papers such as that of Corrigan's in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal* of 1832. Modern periodicals are also present including *Heart*, *American* and *British Heart Journals* and *Archives des Maladies du Coeur*. Though Bedford deprecatingly described himself as a bibliomaniac, he never collected purely for the sake of acquisition. His is a working library from which he extracted a wealth of data, some being published in occasional essays and papers such as those on the pulse. However, much of this knowledge has never previously appeared in print, but was used to entertain and instruct both students and colleagues alike: thus Stokes-Adams was always courteously reversed, as chronological exactitude demands, to Adams-Stokes.

His memory was prodigious and his accuracy unvarying, as all found who checked on his statements. A few sentences from 'DEB' could spare a day's search in reference libraries: (Potain had invariably anticipated one's latest observation in the 1890s!). Now his annotated catalogue, at long last, places this invaluable information within reach of everyone interested.

Facility of retrieval is thoughtfully provided by the author with three distinct indices; name, subject, and associations, thus sparing a reader many hours of search. Further advantage for a researcher is in

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the format of the catalogue, which is divided into topic headings within which individual items are listed chronologically. These topics embrace the whole of cardiology and also reflect Bedford's particular interests such as the pulse, William Harvey, the discovery of the circulation, diagnosis, angina pectoris, and monographs on special subjects. Topics also list separately American, French, German, Italian, and Spanish works, as well as history and biography related to cardiology.

This thoughtful and masterly presentation reveals the consideration of the true scholar who had to 'do it all the hard way' himself and now is easing the chores of his successors.

His annotations to the entries are both pithy and informative; thus on Latham: 'His lectures on angina pectoris are especially interesting and include the post mortem on Arnold of Rugby who died in his first attack and had only one coronary artery'. Editors would bless their authors for summaries as succinct as this. These historical interjections convert a catalogue and check list into

a fascinating book, destined for reading as well as for reference. The single-minded researcher looking up a particular topic will be seduced in passing by any of a dozen others by virtue of these brief but tempting annotations. Who else knew Piorry invented the pleximeter and modified Laennec's stethoscope? Rather than continue to quote, one can but commend the reader to the text, and trust this in turn will guide him to the unique collection in the Harvey Library of the Royal College of Physicians.

References

- Morton, L. T. (1954). *Garrison and Morton's Medical Bibliography*, 2nd ed. Grafton, London.
 Thornton, J. L. (1949). *Medical Books, Libraries and Collectors*. Grafton, London.

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