

## Chapter 16

# PROVENANCE RESEARCH ON LOST MANUSCRIPTS

## THE CASE OF LOUVAIN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY (1919–1940)

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THE HISTORY OF private manuscript collections and the book market at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century and that of institutional libraries preserving manuscripts in the same period generally constitute two largely separate worlds, that only partially overlap, for example in the occasional acquisition to complete a pre-existing rich book collection. It is seldom that a twentieth-century institutional library—one not founded by a collector—is composed solely of manuscripts that were still in private hands or circulating among booksellers only a few years earlier. In this respect, the dossier of Louvain University Library in the inter-war period is an interesting case for two reasons. It is a collection of manuscripts that is “fictitious” (in the sense that it does not correspond to the usual logic of the formation of libraries), and which was constituted by the simultaneous acquisition of about eight hundred manuscripts from very diverse origins; moreover, it existed for barely twenty years, since, after having been constituted in the wake of the destruction of the library during the First World War, it was almost entirely destroyed by fire during the Second World War. This essay is an opportunity for us to present for the first time an ongoing project to reconstitute this lost library, which the Section of Codicology, Library History, and Heraldry of the IRHT is carrying out in collaboration with the libraries of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and of the Université catholique de Louvain, as well as a broader project, that of a new database *Deperditi: Making Missing Manuscripts Talk* (<https://deperditi.irht.cnrs.fr>), on lost or destroyed medieval manuscripts, by focusing on the initial results of a survey of private collections from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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## A Short History of a Short-Lived Collection

The tragic history of the twice burned Louvain University Library is well known.<sup>1</sup> The first destruction of the library occurred at the very beginning of the First World War, on August 25, 1914. It was caused by a firing orchestrated by the German army which completely consumed the building and the collections of the University Library. However, the contents of the old library are largely known, thanks to information compiled before the war by the historian Édouard de Moreau and published in 1918.<sup>2</sup> They corresponded, roughly, apart from recent acquisitions, to the state of the library when it was founded in the seventeenth century as a result of the merging of the book collections from the various faculties and colleges in the city.

The construction and supply of a new library was decided upon in 1919, as part of the war reparations. Article 247 of the Treaty of Versailles was entirely devoted to this issue:

Germany undertakes to furnish to the University of Louvain, within three months after a request made by it and transmitted through the intervention of the Reparation Commission, manuscripts, incunabula, printed books, maps, and objects of collection corresponding in number and value to those destroyed in the burning by Germany of the Library of Louvain.<sup>3</sup>

This request was to be prepared over time. Therefore, the *Office de la restauration de la bibliothèque de l'université de Louvain* was installed, to decide which volumes should be claimed from Germany. It was headed by Louis Stainier, administrator-inspector of the Royal Library of Belgium.<sup>4</sup>

It was decided that Germany would earmark part of the four million German Goldmarks intended to repair the library's losses to buy manuscripts available on the market.

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**1** See, in chronological order, Christian Coppens, "Une bibliothèque imaginaire: De Leuvense Universiteitsbibliotheek 1914–1940," *Ex officina: Bulletin van de Vrienden van de Leuvense Universiteitsbibliotheek* 2 (1985): 64–69; Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Die Bibliothek von Löwen: Eine Episode aus der Zeit der Weltkriege* (Munich: Hanser, 1988); Christian Coppens et al. eds., *Leuven in Books, Books in Leuven: The Oldest University of the Low Countries and its Library* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 1999), 131–53; Jan van Impe, *The University Library of Leuven: Historical Walking Tour* rev. edn. (Leuven: Lipsius Leuven, 2012; first edn. in Dutch: 2003), 15–41; Chris Coppens et al. eds., *Leuven University Library: 1425–2000* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 121–298; Mark Derez, "The Flames of Louvain: A Library as a Cultural Icon and a Political Vehicle," in *What Do We Lose When We Lose a Library? Proceedings of the Conference Held at the KU Leuven 9–11 September 2015*, ed. Mel Collier (Leuven: University Library, KU Leuven, 2016), 25–36.

**2** Édouard de Moreau, *La bibliothèque de l'Université de Louvain "1636–1914"* (Extract of the *Revue des questions scientifiques*), (Leuven: Fonteyn/Ceuterick, 1918), appendix 1 "Liste de quelques manuscrits qui ont péri dans l'incendie de la Bibliothèque," 50–80.

**3** English text in Charles I. Bevans, ed., *Treatises and Other International Agreements of the United States of America 1776–1949*, 13 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968–1976), 2:43–240 at 158 (Part 8, "Reparation," section 2, "Special Provisions").

**4** Louis Stainier, "L'Office de la restauration de la Bibliothèque de l'Université de Louvain," *Annuaire de l'Université catholique de Louvain* 83 (1934–1936): CLXXVIII–CCI.

The book dealer Karl W. Hiersemann in Leipzig was chosen to coordinate the *Einkaufsgesellschaft Löwen* specially created for that aim.<sup>5</sup> Thus, paradoxically, these war reparations which were supposed to be to the benefit of Belgium and to the detriment of the German state also contributed to a flourishing period for the German book market. The selection of the manuscripts was entrusted to a committee of experts, including, for Belgium, Louis Stainier and Alphonse Bayot, former attaché to the Manuscripts Section of the Royal Library and professor at the University of Louvain; for the Germans, the State Commissioner Richard Oehler, librarian at the University Library of Bonn, and Georg Leidinger, director of the Manuscripts Section at the Bavarian State Library. It took five conferences between 1921 and 1924 for the two sides to come to an agreement.<sup>6</sup> In total, 357 manuscripts were brought to Louvain from Germany and arranged in a G. series. Another collection, consisting mainly of donations from Belgian collectors and aristocrats, was added to this first set and constitutes D. series, with shelfmarks ranging from 317 to 786.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the inter-war Louvain Library was an ephemeral collection with a wide variety of provenances: direct donations (especially from Belgian, English, and American donors), and manuscripts bought from German dealers or collections with money provided by the German war repayments.

Of the more than eight hundred manuscripts in the library at the time, only thirty-nine survived the flames caused by the Battle of Louvain in May 1940.<sup>8</sup> Although a summary catalogue of the incunabula was published,<sup>9</sup> the general catalogue planned by Bayot and announced by Stainier never appeared.<sup>10</sup> At the time of the fire, the assistant librarian in charge of the university's manuscript collections, Canon Léopold Le Clercq, was in the process of drawing up the catalogue, but his files and notes unfortunately also perished in the flames.<sup>11</sup> In other words, fate could hardly have taken a greater toll on this library, and the task of historians who want to reconstitute it is difficult.

**5** For a first approach, see Christian Coppens, "Einkaufsgesellschaft Löwen GmbH," in *Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens (LGB<sup>2</sup>)*, ed. Severin Corsten et al., 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1987–1989), 2:440; the archives relating to this "purchasing association" are kept in the Saxon Economic Archives (Sächsische Wirtschaftsarchiv). Among the principal manuscript providers, special mention should be made of Jacques Rosenthal from Munich, from whom at least twenty manuscripts were obtained; we thank Angéline Rais for sharing her data on Rosenthal's catalogues with us.

**6** Stainier, "L'Office de la restauration," cxc–cxci; and "La nouvelle collection d'incunables de la bibliothèque de l'Université de Louvain," in *Congrès international des bibliothécaires et des bibliophiles tenu à Paris du 3 au 9 avril 1923. Procès-verbaux et mémoires*, ed. Fernand Mazerolle and Charles Mortet (Paris: Joue, 1925), 154–65 at 155.

**7** For the G. series, see the statistical table published by Stainier, "L'Office de la restauration," xci.

**8** See Maurice Hélin, "Archives et bibliothèques de Belgique pendant la guerre," *Revue du Moyen Âge latin* 1 (1945): 437–40. We do not exactly know what the number of six hundred manuscripts he laments to have been lost corresponds to (437–38).

**9** Louis Stainier, "De nieuwe verzameling Incunabelen van de universiteitsbibliotheek te Leuven," *Het boek: Tijdschrift voor boek- en bibliotheekwezen. Second Series* 12 (1923): 244–52; and "La nouvelle collection."

**10** Stainier, "L'Office de la restauration," cxci.

**11** See Robert Plancke, "Répertoire des manuscrits de classiques latins conservés en Belgique,"

## Reconstituting the Louvain Manuscript Collection of the Inter-War Period

Library historians are used to working on book collections—especially medieval ones—which are entirely dispersed and of which little or nothing is known, but one does not expect this to be the case for a twentieth-century library. In order to try, as best we can, to make up for the irreparable loss caused by the 1940 fire, we are fortunate to have at our disposal several kinds of sources and documents which help us to reconstruct more or less accurately the contents of this ephemeral library.

The most complete source, which will serve as the base-line document for our project, is the catalogue compiled by Léopold Le Clercq, probably from personal notes, in the 1940s and 1950s to replace his catalogue, still unfinished when it disappeared in the fire. This catalogue was never published, but the original handwritten copy is now kept in the archives of the KU Leuven Library.<sup>12</sup> For most manuscripts it gives a brief codicological description (number of leaves, approximate dating), a fairly general indication of contents, and some indications of provenance.

This first document can be supplemented by numerous notes taken in the 1920s and 1930s by a Belgian Benedictine monk, Dom Donatien De Bruyne. He was working, among other things, on the medieval library of St. James's Abbey in Liège and he played an important role in the decision to "repatriate" the Liège manuscripts to Belgium from the collections of the Princes von Fürstenberg in Herdringen Castle, kept at that time in the Academia Theodoriana in Paderborn.<sup>13</sup> Several notebooks or loose leaves filled with notes on the library's manuscripts remain in the archives of the library of the Abbey of Maredsous in Belgium and have so far only partially been exploited. With the logistical help of the young Dom Cyrille Lambot, then a professor at the University of Louvain, De Bruyne provided a brief description of the contents of all the manuscripts in the library—and not only those from Liège—but above all a dating and a record of many provenance indications and various shelfmarks visible in the books or on their bindings.<sup>14</sup>

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*Revue des études latines* 18 (1940): 141–86 at 144, which specifies that Le Clercq was preparing the catalogue in 1938 (the date of the compilation of this article, which was published two years later; see 142). Christine Mortiaux-Denoël and Étienne Guillaume, "Le fonds des manuscrits de l'abbaye de Saint-Jacques de Liège: II. Dispersion et localisation actuelle," *Revue Bénédictine*, 107 (1997): 352–80 at 358 probably mistakenly attribute the making of this catalogue to A. Bayot.

**12** A typescript copy of it is available on request from the library staff.

**13** On the fate of St. James's manuscripts from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, see Christine Mortiaux-Denoël, "Le fonds des manuscrits de l'abbaye de Saint-Jacques de Liège: I. Jusqu'à la vente de 1788," *Revue Bénédictine* 101 (1991): 154–91; Mortiaux-Denoël and Guillaume, "Le fonds des manuscrits de l'abbaye de Saint-Jacques de Liège: II."

**14** Denée, Bibliothèque de l'abbaye de Maredsous (no shelfmark). We are grateful to Dom Pierre-Maurice Bogaert for drawing our attention to the existence of these papers and allowing us to make use of them. On the deposit of the Fürstenberg Library at Paderborn from 1919 to 1975 and for a list of sixty-five manuscripts from this collection transferred to Louvain, see Karl Hengst, "Die Erzbischöfliche Akademische Bibliothek in Paderborn," in *Ein Jahrhundert Akademische Bibliothek*

These two complementary sources, which may or may not be consistent with each other (they particularly differ concerning the dating of handwriting), give a fairly precise and homogeneous idea of the contents and materiality of the library's lost volumes. In some cases, it is possible to have an even more intimate knowledge of one or more volumes thanks to the work, published or unpublished, of researchers who had access to the riches of this library during its short existence. The role of the Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, founded in 1937, should be highlighted here. In 1939, Marie-Thérèse Vernet-Boucrel was sent to Louvain on one of the Institute's first missions abroad to make detailed descriptions and photographs of the manuscripts of Latin classical authors, only a few months before the fire in May 1940. The descriptions she published in *Mélanges Félix Grat* in 1949 of fourteen manuscripts are by far the most substantial we have of manuscripts from the collection.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the Classics, the Flemish manuscripts were thoroughly analysed in the 1920s by Willem Lodewijk de Vreese, whose handwritten files of his *Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta* are now kept in Leiden University Library.<sup>16</sup> Not all the library's manuscripts were examined so systematically during this period, but several critical editions have taken into account the evidence of lost manuscripts, which allow philologists to link one particular volume to one particular branch of the textual tradition; and it is worthwhile to systematically search the bibliography and the archives of scholars for descriptions and transcriptions that might reveal some other characteristics of a manuscript that the catalogue does not describe in detail.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, reproductions of all or part of each volume provide another useful source: old photographs, microfilms, or plates and/or facsimiles published in research works or sales catalogues.<sup>18</sup> Currently, around thirty *codices Lovanienses* that were destroyed

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Paderborn: *Zur Geschichte des Buches in der Mitteldeutschen Kirchenprovinz mit einem Verzeichnis der mittelalterlichen Handschriften in Paderborn*, ed. Karl Hengst (Paderborn: H & S, 1996), 11–36, esp. 21, 33–36.

**15** Marie-Thérèse Vernet-Boucrel, “Quelques manuscrits de classiques latins à la Bibliothèque universitaire de Louvain,” in *Mélanges dédiés à la mémoire de Félix Grat*, ed. Jeanne Viellard et al., 2 vols. (Paris: Pecqueur-Grat, 1946–1949), 2:351–86.

**16** All his unpublished descriptions have been digitized and can be found on the *BNM* website, “Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta: Documentation on Middle Dutch Manuscripts Kept Worldwide,” Universiteit Leiden, <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/collection/bnm>, accessed August 28, 2023.

**17** To give just two examples, there is the case of MS †G. 170, a manuscript from the second half of the thirteenth century, which was one of the two known witnesses to the Anglo-Norman version of *Beuve de Hantone* and which was described and used for editing the text (before its arrival in Louvain) by Albert Stimming, *Der anglonormannische Boeve de Haumtone* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1899), iv–viii. Another manuscript, †G. 71 (sixteenth century), containing a collection of ascetic and spiritual works written in Brabantine dialect, was studied in Louvain by several scholars and some of the texts it contained have come to us thanks to the transcriptions published in the inter-war period: see, among others, Mattheus Verjans, “De geestelijke hand,” *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 5 (1931): 81–88 at 86–87.

**18** The known examples mainly concern the manuscripts that disappeared during the 1914 firing. Moreover, a large number of them were used in the preparation of Canon Edmond Reusens's

in 1940 can be studied in full or in part in such a way. Research still needs to be carried out to enrich this first collection, mainly in photographic or filmographic collections, which, it is hoped, will bring to light other vestiges of these lost books.<sup>19</sup> Even though they are very incomplete, these reproductions are of crucial importance, particularly for palaeographers, who can now, thanks to advances in the discipline, revise or refine dates put forward almost a century ago, for philologists, but also for those interested in history and provenance of manuscripts.

Unlike most similar attempts to reconstruct dispersed book collections, our aim is not to know what has become of these volumes: we unfortunately know the answer. It is rather a question of trying to virtually reconstitute both their textual and material content. To do this, we have a multitude of varied and complementary sources at our disposal. We will now consider how this can be done and what methods should be adopted to give the most accurate account of the contents of the library and the materiality of its books.

A first step, which we hope to achieve in the near future in collaboration with An Smets, conservator of the special collections of the KU Leuven Library, is to provide a comparative and cumulative catalogue, which gives a “blind description” of the lost manuscripts based on the existing testimonies, pointing out all the characteristics attested by several sources as highly reliable, while also underlining the divergences that may exist between sources. To the sources concerning the Louvain library in particular, others can be added: these include the catalogues of the booksellers from whom manuscripts were purchased (direct provenance) and, if a former possessor is known, other possible inventories of the library in question (indirect provenance), in order to compare different descriptions and gather as much information as possible.

This data will be integrated into the *Deperditi* database. This project consists of drawing up the “identikit” of destroyed, damaged, or missing manuscripts, mainly lost during wartime, based on all known testimonies (either concordant or discordant). It aims to gather all available information on the books: description, transcription, collation, use in a text edition, various mentions in bibliography, etc. These descriptions, which will be verified, completed, and corrected in the long term as new discoveries are made, are freely accessible in the dual form of a relational database of the type of the IRHT Bibale database,<sup>20</sup> and a virtual library associated with it.

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*Éléments de paléographie* (Leuven: Reusens, 1899). Thanks to this work, some thirty reproductions of these disappeared manuscripts have been preserved; see Moreau, *La Bibliothèque*, 50–80; *Deperditi* website, <https://deperditi.irht.cnrs.fr>.

**19** These include the photographic collections of the Villa I Tatti near Florence, the microfilms of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library at St. John's University, some series in UC Louvain's Archives Department, and some private collections.

**20** “Bibale” is accessible online at <https://bibale.irht.cnrs.fr>; accessed August 28, 2023. On this database, see Hanno Wijsman, “The Bibale Database at the IRHT: A Digital Tool for Researching Manuscript Provenance,” *Manuscript Studies* 1 (2016): 328–41.

## Some Recent Provenances of the Manuscripts

The lost Louvain manuscript collection included 827 items (357 in the G. series and 470 in the D. series), of which some 270 were pre-1600 manuscripts (about two hundred in the G. series and seventy in the D. series). The eighteenth century alone represented about 40 percent of the material. In the framework of our ongoing research, we will highlight some recent provenances of the medieval manuscripts († indicates that a manuscript is known to be destroyed).

The D. series contained many Belgian gifts, almost all of which were seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documents. Several members of the Belgian noble and political elite donated manuscripts from their private collections, mostly genealogical and heraldic manuscripts. Nineteen items (†D. 528–46) were given by an erudite priest, Jean Paquay from Bilzen in the province of Limburg. These were mostly archival documents, but also included a fifteenth-century manuscript of St. Jerome's letters (†D. 530). A certain "L. de Ridder" (likely a Louis de Ridder who remains to be fully identified), gave a very eclectic group of thirty items (†D. 372–85, †D. 512–27), most of which were from the eighteenth century or remain completely unidentified for the moment, but three are sixteenth-century prayerbooks in Dutch and two others were a fifteenth-century *Algorismus et de computo* by Johannes de Sacrobosco and a *Recueil ascétique* dated to 1415.

At least three volumes came from the library of a German collector, Friedrich von Schennis. Indeed three (partly) microfilmed manuscripts bore his "Ex-libris Friderici de Schennis": †G. 107 (Cicero, *De senectute* et al.), †G. 172 (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*), †G. 211 (Lucan, *Bellum civile*, thirteenth/fourteenth century). This *ex libris* can also be found in surviving manuscripts in other libraries around the world, for example in an eleventh-century New Testament in Greek, now in the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago (Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick Library, MS Gruber 119) and in a fifteenth-century Italian Cicero manuscript, now in the Bodmer Collection in Cologne (Cod. Bodmer 50). Von Schennis was a scion of a wealthy Swiss family, who became a painter and lived most of his life in Germany, especially in Düsseldorf and Berlin. He painted mostly landscapes and lived, according to several sources, in Berlin the life of a "bohémien" and dandy. Interestingly, he also was a collector of medieval manuscripts, specifically containing classical texts. These three von Schennis's manuscripts came to Louvain from Hiersemann.<sup>21</sup>

Many manuscripts came to the Louvain Library from Hiersemann's shop, including †G. 107, †G. 112 (a fifteenth-century *Missale Romano-Seraphicum*), †G. 172, †G. 190 (a twelfth-century *Liber sacramentorum Augsburgensis*), †G. 211, and several Middle-Eastern Christian manuscripts (including †G. 134, †G. 151, †G. 197, †G. 203, †G. 224). Since the aim of the *Office de la restauration de la bibliothèque* was to reconstruct a university library with many kinds of texts in various languages, it was interested in a great variety

<sup>21</sup> *Katalog 460: Handschriften, Inkunabeln und wertvolle Ausgaben der Klassiker des Altertums, der Humanisten und Neulateiner enthaltend den betr. Teil der Bibliothek des † Kunstmalers F. von Schennis und andere Sammlungen* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1918), respectively lots 468 and 115 (Lucan's manuscript is not mentioned in this catalogue).



of manuscripts. The choice of the three von Schennis manuscripts bought from Hiersemann, as well as a Missal, a Sacramentary, and several manuscripts with Christian texts in Syriac and Arab, may be partly explained by a specific interest in classical, as well as religious manuscripts for the library of a university with a broad intellectual interest which was also a Catholic university. However, the decision must also have originated in the simple chance of which manuscripts were available at that moment. Indeed, in 1921 Hiersemann had just recently bought the von Schennis library, full of classical texts, and he had a substantial stock of Middle-Eastern Christian manuscripts.<sup>22</sup>

In her 1939 description of †G. 211 (Lucan, *Bellum civile*), Marie-Thérèse Vernet-Boucrel transcribed the *ex libris* "Henry Drury 1819 very ancient ms." (which we can check on the existing photo) and attributed it to "Rév. Henry Drury."<sup>23</sup> There may be some confusion here between Henry Drury (1778–1841), who was schoolmaster at Harrow, and a friend of Lord Byron, and a Reverend Henry Drury (1812–1863), who was indeed a rector, vicar, and archdeacon. While the second is more likely to have been referred to as "Reverend," the mention of the year 1819 must lead us to conclude that the *ex libris* belongs to the first one, which is indeed confirmed by the handwriting of others of his notes and *ex libris*.<sup>24</sup>

The presence of at least ten manuscripts from Sir Thomas Phillipps in the Louvain collection is not surprising because Phillipps's manuscripts flooded the market in the early twentieth century. They are all part of the G. collection, so in the early 1920s they came to Louvain from German collections:

†G. 108 Radulphus Flaviacensis, *Super Leviticum*, thirteenth century  
(Phillipps MS 426).

†G. 109 *Histoire de la Passion de Notre Seigneur*, fourteenth/fifteenth century  
(Phillipps MS 1330).

<sup>22</sup> *Katalog 500: Orientalische Manuskripte: Arabische, syrische, griechische, armenische, persische Handschriften des 7.–18. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1922). Middle-Eastern manuscripts in Louvain were fairly accurately reported before they were destroyed: see Arnold van Lantschoot, "Inventaire sommaire de manuscrits arabes d'Égypte (Bibliothèque de l'Université de Louvain. Fonds Le Fort, série A: Mss. chrétiens)," *Le Muséon* 48 (1935): 297–310; Willi Heffening, "Die islamischen Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Löwen," *Le Muséon* 50 (1937): 85–100; Jean Simon, "Répertoire des bibliothèques publiques et privées d'Europe contenant des manuscrits arabes chrétiens," *Orientalia. Nova Series* 7 (1938): 239–64 at 252–53; and "Répertoire des bibliothèques publiques et privées d'Europe contenant des manuscrits syriaques," *Orientalia. Nova Series* 9 (1940): 271–88 at 279–80; Louis-Théophile Lefort, *Les manuscrits coptes de l'Université de Louvain*, vol. 1 *Textes littéraires* (Leuven: Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1940); Bernard Outtier, "Le sort des manuscrits du Katalog Hiersemann 500," *Analecta Bollandiana* 93 (1975): 377–80.

<sup>23</sup> Vernet-Boucrel, "Quelques manuscrits," 380. The digitized microfilm is available on the ARCA website: <https://arca.irht.cnrs.fr/ark:/63955/md5370795p47>, accessed August 28, 2023.

<sup>24</sup> See for instance Henry Drury's notes in Cologny, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 3; New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS 265; BL, Add. MS 82956.



- †G. 145 Sulpicius Severus, *Gesta Sancti Martini Turonensis*, thirteenth/fourteenth century (Phillipps MS 3688).
- †G. 147 *Pontus et la belle Sidoine*, fifteenth century (Phillipps MS 3594).
- †G. 157 Cicero, *De inventione*, etc., twelfth century (Phillipps MS 9455).
- †G. 211 Lucan, *Bellum civile*, thirteenth/fourteenth century (Drury; Phillipps MS 3388; von Schennis; Hiersemann).
- †G. 213 *Varia patrística*, twelfth century (Phillipps MS 1123; George Dunn).
- †G. 215 *Recueil théologique et philosophique*, thirteenth century (Phillipps MS 9240; Hermann Suchier).
- †G. 229 Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum*, fifteenth century (Aloysius Marsuzi; Frederick North, fifth Earl of Guilford; Phillipps MS 7829).
- †G. 261 *Scander sive calamitatum ab immanissimo Turco Christianis illatarum flebilis querimonia* (Complaint on the Christian war against the Turks), early sixteenth century (Phillipps MS 11021).

Manuscript †D. 408 (Sallust, *De coniuratione Catilinae*; *Bellum Iugurthinum*) bore Sir Charles Geisler Thomas-Stanford's bookplate, described and photographed in 1939. Thomas-Stanford was a British politician and classical philologist.<sup>25</sup> He used at least two bookplates in his manuscripts and other books. Both show his quartered arms, his motto "Aequus in arduis," and his full name.<sup>26</sup> His library, sold on March 18, 1909 at Sotheby's, is supposed to have been bought *en bloc* by the Philadelphia collector and bookseller A. S. W. Rosenbach.<sup>27</sup> However, Thomas-Stanford may not have sold everything he had. The Louvain Sallust, an Italian manuscript from the middle of the fifteenth century, was a gift to Louvain University Library, and though for the moment we have not found information on the donor, it seems quite possible it was Thomas-Stanford himself, since not only his bookplate but also his armorial binding are prominently present.<sup>28</sup>

Another English bibliophile, who built up a substantial library at Woolley Hall, Berkshire, was George Dunn.<sup>29</sup> His collection included many medieval manuscripts, espe-

<sup>25</sup> See <https://bibale.irht.cnrs.fr/99650>, accessed August 28, 2023.

<sup>26</sup> The bookplate in †D. 408 is also found in an incunable (*Fasciculus temporum*, 1481) sold at Christie's on April 23, 2021, lot 160. The other bookplate is for example pasted into an incunable (Giannantonio Campano, *Opera*, 1495), now kept in Bryn Mawr College Library, fC-73.

<sup>27</sup> On Rosenbach's buying activity, see Edwin Wolf II and John F. Fleming, *Rosenbach: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960); George Bodmer, "A. S. W. Rosenbach: Dealer and Collector," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 22 (1998): 277-88.

<sup>28</sup> On his armorial binding, see "British Armorial Bindings." University of Toronto Libraries. [https://armorial.library.utoronto.ca/stamps/ITH0001\\_s2](https://armorial.library.utoronto.ca/stamps/ITH0001_s2), accessed August 28, 2023.

<sup>29</sup> A warm thanks to Bill Stoneman who is preparing a list of Dunn's manuscripts and their

cially from the Phillipps and Ashburnham sales. His bookplate ("From the Library of George Dunn of Woolley Hall near Maidenhead") is easy to recognize.<sup>30</sup> After his death his library was sold at Sotheby's between 1913 and 1917.<sup>31</sup> Four of his manuscripts ended up in the Louvain collection. We do not have any precise clues yet as to how exactly they came to Louvain, but since this collection was sold in London between 1913 and 1917 and all four manuscripts were part of the G. series, they definitely were part of German collections, or, most probably, owned by German booksellers, around 1920:

- G. 124** St. Bernard, *Sermones*, twelfth century (Benedictine Abbey of Grammont; Sotheby's, March 8, 1900, lot 703; London, J. & J. Leighton, booksellers; George Dunn; Sotheby's, February 11, 1913, lot 403; London, J. & J. Leighton, booksellers).
- †**G. 187** Julius Solinus, *Liber de situ orbis terrarum*, thirteenth century (George Dunn; Sotheby's, February 11, 1913, lot 654; London, J. & J. Leighton, booksellers; Munich, Gottlob Hess, booksellers).
- †**G. 213** *Varia patristica*, twelfth century (Sir Thomas Phillipps; Sotheby's, March 8, 1900, lot 499 A-B; London, J. & J. Leighton, booksellers; George Dunn; Sotheby's, February 2, 1914, lot 1188; London/New York, Erhard Weyhe, booksellers).
- †**G. 233** Humbert of Romans, *Expositio regulae beati Augustini*, 1460 (Florence, Howell Wills; Sotheby's, July 11, 1894, lot 1702; George Dunn; Sotheby's, February 11, 1913, lot 640; London, J. & J. Leighton, booksellers; Sotheby's, November 2, 1920, lot 3635).

Manuscripts also came to Louvain from the United States. Susan Minns was one of the first women to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is best known for the various collections she built up throughout her life. Among other things, she collected representations of death, particularly books and prints depicting the Danse macabre.

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provenances and, following the discussion at the conference, shared his provenance data on these manuscripts with us. Some of these have been listed here: <https://bibale.irht.cnrs.fr/7833>, accessed August 28, 2023.

**30** See <https://bibale.irht.cnrs.fr/97232>, accessed August 28, 2023. It is for example also found in a manuscript (Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae*; Hugh of St. Victor, *Adnotationes in psalmos*) recently sold by Les Enluminures, TM 359, [www.textmanuscripts.com/medieval/binding-aquinas-compendium-60641](http://www.textmanuscripts.com/medieval/binding-aquinas-compendium-60641), accessed August 28, 2023.

**31** *Catalogue of the Valuable & Extensive Library Formed by George Dunn, Esq....Which will be Sold by Auction...11th of February, 1913* (London: Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 1913); *Catalogue of the Valuable & Extensive Library Formed by George Dunn, Esq....Which will be Sold by Auction...2nd February, 1914* (London: Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 1914); *Catalogue of the Valuable & Extensive Library Formed by George Dunn, Esq....Which will be Sold by Auction...22nd November, 1917* (London: Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 1917).

In 1922, she chose to sell this collection, but when the sale was already prepared and the catalogue, containing 1,020 lots, printed, she was informed by Whitney Warren, the American architect of the Louvain Library, about the situation in Louvain. Thereupon, she decided to donate the considerable sum of \$12,500 to Louvain University Library on the condition that the money had to be spent at her sale.<sup>32</sup> Thus, among about four hundred other—printed—documents, seven manuscripts came to Louvain, including four fifteenth-century Books of Hours (use of Paris, Rouen, and Rome). Four of these manuscripts survived the war and are still in Leuven.<sup>33</sup>

- †D. 328 *Officium defunctorum*, eighteenth century  
(Minns, lot 405, as twelfth/thirteenth century).
- D. 329 *Horae*, use of Paris, fifteenth century (Minns, lot 416).
- D. 330 *Horae*, use of Rouen, fifteenth century (Minns, lot 419).
- D. 331 *Horae*, use of Rome, fifteenth century (Minns, lot 409).
- D. 332 *Horae*, use of Rome, fifteenth/sixteenth century  
(Gaetano Milio Marieri di Ficarea; Minns, lot 413).
- †D. 333 *Extraits patristiques sur la mort*, in a Slavonic language, sixteenth century  
(Minns, lot 427).
- †D. 334 *Prières pour les défunts et les oraisons pour demander une sainte mort*,  
seventeenth century (Minns, lot 426).

## Conclusion

One of the interesting aspects of the *Office de la restauration de la bibliothèque de l'université de Louvain* was that it sought to “replace” a lost collection and therefore set out to consciously explore which manuscripts had equivalent value. However, though the commission estimated the monetary value of the destroyed library building and modern printed books, it finally concluded that it was impossible to estimate the value of the lost manuscripts and incunables. It chose only to provide a list of numbers and categories of the lost manuscripts and stating that for the sake of the replacement of the collection, the *scientific* value of the manuscripts was more important than the exact number or the trade value of the manuscripts.<sup>34</sup> For a university collection, this may not seem a very surprising way of thinking. However, it is interesting to follow the line of thought from the point of view of our twenty-first-century research in which it may be all too obvious that manuscripts are unique, that their specific provenance is part of that

32 Leuven in Books, 159–61; Leuven University Library, 286.

33 Leuven, Bibliotheek KUL, MS 1016.

34 Stainier, “L’Office de la restauration,” CLXXXIV.

uniqueness, and that the replacement of a collection by another one of the same value is a tricky enterprise.

Though the context of war reparations is very political, it is obvious, both from the explicit aims formulated by the *Office de la restauration de la bibliothèque*,<sup>35</sup> and from the analysis of the contents of the library, that the selected manuscripts were much more than a collection with a Belgian national interest. Certainly, there were some manuscripts in Middle Dutch and even more specifically in Brabantine or Limburg dialects, while the acquisition of eighty-eight manuscripts from St. James monastery can be seen as a “repatriation” of (part of) a lost “national” collection. However, Louvain University also had other goals. First, as a Catholic university, many religious items, medieval and modern, were included. Moreover, the medieval or humanist manuscripts containing classical texts can be seen as a more general acquisition by the oldest university of the Low Countries with a long-standing intellectual tradition. Finally, a rather small but significant range of manuscripts in Greek, as well as in Syriac, Arab, Coptic, and other non-European languages show the desire to achieve a broad intellectual and geographic scope. At the time, Louvain already had a rich tradition of studies in non-western cultures and languages.

This inter-war Louvain collection has largely (though not completely) escaped the attention of provenance researchers, firstly because many were donated, not sold (thus leaving no trace in sales catalogues as being sold to Louvain University Library), and secondly because they were burned a few years later, along with all the documentation on their cataloguing and their acquisition. Reconstructing (as far as possible) the inter-war Louvain collection is therefore a challenge, but one that touches upon many of the problems and questions provenance researchers are used to encounter, maybe even all of them.

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35 Stainier, “L’Office de la restauration,” CLXXX–CLXXXV.