

‘An Earthloome or Heyrloome as wee call it...’ : the library of
Sir Roger Twysden (1597-1672) his books identified and
reading practices unravelled.

The paper sets out to demonstrate how the detailed study of a private library collected by a provincial gentleman scholar during the course of the greater part of the seventeenth century can further our understanding both of that individual’s reading practices and his mental world during a period of unprecedented national turmoil and change.

The focus of this paper will be the Kentish scholar and antiquarian, Sir Roger Twysden and the books he selected to build his great library, which he saw as a priceless resource for his descendants. Although no contemporary catalogue of his library exists, considerable efforts have been made to trace the contents using early sales catalogues and contemporary catalogues from libraries and institutions, in addition to references in Twysden’s own writings to his books. This information has been used to address the questions of what subject matter interested him and the practicalities of how he obtained his books and manuscripts including the prices he paid for them. His specific book collecting habits have been contextualised by comparing them with the studies that have been made of other book collectors of the time, in particular those of his Kentish contemporaries.

A habit of autographing and dating books at the time of acquisition by Twysden has made possible both this chronological study of his changing bibliographic interests and identifies peaks and troughs in his purchase of books. This evidence, together with his use of annotation and marginalia where this occurs, reveals his evolving preoccupations with texts as authority and sources for his own writings.

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