THE LIBRARY OF JOHN GILMARY SHEA: EXPLORING THE BOOK COLLECTING MIND OF A NINETEENTH-CENTURY HISTORIAN

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of The School of Continuing Studies and of The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

By

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ABSTRACT

Since there have been books to collect, there have been book collectors. When Renaissance technology brought about the possibility for a wider distribution of books (i.e., knowledge) with the development of printing using moveable type, books became less unique; however, books remained dear for several hundred years. And beyond their tomes, book collectors have existed to varying heights of fame throughout history. Is it the books collected or the collectors themselves that should be remembered? Perhaps it is both. There have been memorable collectors from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century, when again, technology changed and expanded the dissemination of knowledge. These include Bishop Richard de Bury, Jean Grolier, Jacques-Auguste de Thou, the Marquesa de Pompadour, Sir John Soane, Thomas Jefferson, James Lenox, and Rush C. Hawkins. John Gilmary Shea was a nineteenth-century book collector of great depth; but who today remembers him as such?

Historians go in and out of favor, as historical trends change. So many historians who were well known in their lifetimes are barely considered when even a mere twenty years have passed after their deaths. However, they have left behind the legacies of their historical output. John Gilmary Shea, following in the footsteps of his mentor E. B. O’Callaghan, lived in the time of the archivist historian: that is, historians who
propagated the facts and the facts alone, as garnered by documentary evidence. This is not to say that the impact of a George Bancroft did not leave its mark on such archivist historians. This is to say that John Gilmary Shea was an entirely different type of historian, given to the painstaking detail of bibliography, given to reprinting for the select scholar rare volumes and primary source material from ages past. Additional to his numerous historical publications, John Gilmary Shea left another legacy: his library. He particularly wished for it to be preserved and increased for the use of scholars in American Catholic history. This wish was attained when Georgetown College entered into an agreement to purchase Shea’s library collection in 1892.

This thesis sought evidence of the book collecting mind of John Gilmary Shea through the manuscript material that is preserved today in publicly accessible repositories. Much was gleaned through Shea’s Library Catalog, the fragments of paper assembled by Shea and now in the collections of the American Antiquarian Society. This catalog was Shea’s attempt to assess and evaluate his library. The long correspondence between John Gilmary Shea and his mentor, E. B. O’Callaghan, was studied in detail, through collections available at the Library of Congress, The Catholic University of America, and Georgetown University. Additional evidence provided by Shea’s one biographer to date, Father Peter Guilday, as well as later scholars and even Shea’s family help to place Shea within the context of his time. Further, the context of book collecting, especially in the nineteenth century is examined; Shea is placed within this sphere. Lastly, John Gilmary Shea is compared as a collector to the two other great nineteenth-century collectors of Catholic Americana: Father Joseph Finotti and Edmund Bailey
O’Callaghan. John Gilmary Shea’s library collection, as retained in the Rare Books Collections and Manuscripts Collections at Georgetown University, is in itself historical evidence of a nineteenth-century collecting mind. Nevertheless, how and what he collected and why, especially as described in his own words, help to illuminate a heretofore understudied aspect of his historical method.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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October, 2010. In addition, I thank W. John Shepherd, Associate Archivist at the American Catholic Research Center and University Archives, The Catholic University of America. John was especially helpful with traversing the John Gilmary Shea material within the Peter Guilday Papers during two cold and dreary December days. Staff members in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress were impeccably professional throughout my month of Saturdays accessing eighteen volumes of the Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers. And for my colleagues at Georgetown University, I remain eternally obliged for your patience and kindness to me. Under the direction of George M. Barringer, who led Georgetown University Library’s Special Collections division for thirty-five years, Louis Reith and Scott Taylor cataloged the John Gilmary Shea Collection and processed the John Gilmary Shea Papers, respectively. Without their work, I could not have even contemplated this project. For her patience and unfailingly authoritative advice, I am indebted to Lynn Conway, University Archivist. And for allowing me to bend their ears as expert reference and research librarians, I am grateful to Judith McManus and Sandra Hussey. Judy and Sandy even volunteered to read this thesis, which is assistance above and beyond!

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CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND OF JOHN GILMARY SHEA AND HIS COLLECTION

I should like to see it in some Catholic Institution where it would be preserved and increased.
—John Gilmary Shea

John Gilmary Shea collected to support his research: the history of Catholicism, and especially its history in the United States. But he also poignantly realized at the end of his life that his book collection had monetary as well as historical value, and that the sale of it could financially support his wife and daughters after he no longer could. The sale of his library could also finance his life’s work: the publication of The History of the Catholic Church in the United States. To that end, Shea sought both to keep his collection together and to find a willing buyer. Georgetown College did both.¹ More than one hundred years have passed since this purchase; however, questions persist as to the provenance of significant items in Shea’s collection: how did Shea collect? Provenance is the history of ownership, and most items in Shea’s collection were owned by few before him. Unfortunately, John Gilmary Shea did not document consistently how he obtained many items in his large collection, or from whom. But answers can still be gleaned from what he collected as compared with the collecting minds of his contemporaries. This thesis will compare John Gilmary Shea with other nineteenth-century collectors, seeking to find similarities in the minds of book collectors that transcend the subjects of their collections. Essentially this thesis seeks to find the essence

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¹ According to the University Archivist, Georgetown officially became a University in 1966.
of the nineteenth-century collecting mind and to place John Gilmary Shea, a great Catholic historian, within that sphere.

Section 1: Who was John Dawson Gilmary Shea?

In June of 1891, approximately eight months before his death, John Gilmary Shea published an editorial in the *Catholic News*. In it, he makes a case for the value of collecting, and especially, the value of his own collection:

> Every year in the houses and institutions of Catholics more historical material is destroyed than five historical societies will hereafter be able to collect in twenty years. For the early Spanish and French period and part of the country much was printed [sic], but the great archives of New Mexico have been wantonly destroyed in our time by Federal officials, ignorant or venal interlopers from abroad, who knew nothing and cared nothing for the early history of the Catholic territory. In our time much of the archives of the California missions has been scattered, and fragments are used by our enemies to make the Catholic Church and its work ridiculous in the eyes of the public. The records of our oldest churches are neglected, and are gradually disappearing. Even our printed material is difficult to reach. There is scarcely one perfect set of the *Catholic Directories*. We have never seen a perfect set of the older Catholic newspapers. The collection of the earliest Catholic books which the Rev. J. M. Finotti formed at great expense and labor was scattered to the winds, no Catholic making an effort to preserve it intact. Letters of early Catholic missionaries or of Catholic laymen who were zealous for the faith are constantly destroyed.

> Here is work for Catholic Historical Societies, and an immense work requiring patience, faith, perseverance and a spirit of sacrifice. It behooves us to act or to be disgraced. Those who come after us will not spare us in their just and weeping condemnation if the present apathy continues. Non-Catholic institutions and libraries are waking up to the importance of collecting the once despised Catholic material. When in an auction room a rare Catholic book or pamphlet turns up, the Catholic who wishes to buy finds that his competitors are not Catholics or very rarely so.2

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Here, the underlying message was that yet another painstakingly assembled Catholic collection—his own—should not be “scattered to the winds.” In truth, collections have often been dispersed over the course of the centuries of book collecting. Many academic libraries, even in today’s still comparatively young libraries within the United States, hold examples from great and prolific Renaissance collectors, such as Jean Grolier and Jacques-Auguste de Thou. Scholars of history and its subsets, such as art history and bibliography, must recreate collections from evidence in auction/sales catalogues and provenance notes in collection records; and this is, of course, if the information is publicly accessible. How many treasures exist in the hands of the private collector, yet to be offered up for sale or generously gifted? How many treasures will be disposed of before their worth—that is, their research merit—is realized? The plain answer lies within one’s definition of treasure. Shea’s definition encompassed Catholic Americana. But John Gilmary Shea did not have the financial means to give his collection away to a worthy institution.

Modern biographical resources categorize Shea as a bibliographer. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (henceforth, *OED*) defines bibliography as one of four actions or nouns: “1. The writing of books. 2. The systematic description of the history of books, their authorship, printing, publication, editions, etc. 3. A book containing such details. 4. A list of books of a particular author, printer, or country, or of those dealing with any particular theme; the literature of a subject.”3 As a segment of history, bibliography sets the stage for the work of historians; it is a necessary phase of documentation. In fact,

bibliography is history, and its practitioners, historians. Whether or not it was his intention, John Gilmary Shea became one of the most significant bibliographers of American Catholic literature.

John Dawson Shea was born on July 22, 1824 to an Irish-immigrant father (James Shea) and a mother of Irish descent (Mary Flannigan Shea). The Sheas had many children; however, only John and his elder brother, Charles Edward, reached adulthood.4 Almost immediately after arriving in the United States in 1815, James Shea met and fell into favor with Revolutionary War general, John A. Schuyler, and spent several years as tutor to Schuyler’s children. He then taught in his own school until 1829, when he became the head of the English Department of what was to become Columbia University. According to Peter Guilday, John Gilmary Shea’s biographer, James Shea was a patriotic American, and a man faithful to the Catholic Church. “James Shea imparted to his two sons the finer aspects of the new democracy. They were being reared in a household where the love of American history dwelt side-by-side with a profound knowledge of the faith and the history of the Catholic Church.”5 This upbringing influenced John Shea’s choices for his own contributions to the documentation of American history.

John Shea suffered poor health as a child; he was not given to the physical pursuits of childhood, such as running and playing sports. He was more inclined to the intellectual, greatly enjoying studying and reading; in short, Shea did not enjoy the pastimes of the typical nineteenth-century boy. In fact, Shea’s father teasingly termed

4 Guilday, John Gilmary Shea, 14.

5 Ibid., 15.
him “Mary”; and John Dawson Shea remembered that gentle jest later in life after he entered the Jesuit order, dropping his given middle name and taking up Gilmary (which means Mary’s servant).⁶ He excelled in grammar school, and seemed ready in 1837 to follow in his elder brother’s footsteps: to enter Columbia College, where his father taught. Instead, Shea went to work, ⁷ utilizing his aptitude for languages in a counting house run by Señor Don Tomas, a Spanish merchant. There he worked for six years, becoming fluent in Spanish, but also pursuing intellectual interests in writing, horticulture, as well as beginning to collect.⁸ In 1838, at age fourteen, Shea published his first article: an essay on Cardinal Albornoz in the *Children’s Catholic Magazine*.⁹ These early years foreshadowed Shea’s ultimate vocation: diligently working to earn a living while patiently pursuing publishing on the subject of Catholic history.

By 1846, Shea was ready for a change. His parents had both passed away, and he needed to make a living. His elder brother had passed the bar and established himself professionally. As a potential vocation, Shea also studied law. Guilday mentions a lack of documentation on John Shea’s legal practice; however, clues exist to Shea’s other life, the life of the researcher:

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⁶ Ibid.


[T]here is evidence that he had been busily engaged in reading the sources for the colonial history of the Church in this country. The first-fruits of these researches, entitled Our Martyrs, appeared in the United States Catholic Magazine in 1846-47, then edited by Rev. Dr. Charles I. White and Rev. Dr. Martin J. Spalding, later Archbishop of Baltimore. These articles, nine in number, attracted attention, and many readers began asking about ‘J. D. S.’ as they were signed.10

In addition, Shea had been admitted to the New York Historical Society in 1846.11 His association with the New York Historical Society exposed him not only to written resources, but also to fellow researchers; to brilliant minds with perspectives and experiences beyond his own. And brilliant minds were what he found soon after when he entered the Society of Jesus, “signing himself with the name he used ever afterwards, John Gilmary.”12 He began life as a scholastic at Fordham University, the novitiate at the time; and when the novitiate moved in 1850 to St. Mary’s College in Montreal, the young Shea found his first true mentor in Jesuit historian Father Felix Martin, S.J, president of the college.13

As a researcher, Father Martin relied on primary sources, that is, historical documents, rather than solely on the published writing of others. He had accumulated over his lifetime rich archival material relating to New France, and he enlisted Shea’s

10 Guilday, John Gilmary Shea, 18.


12 Guilday, John Gilmary Shea, 18-19. Guilday states that Shea entered the Society in July of 1848; however, Henry Warner Bowden contradicts this date, giving July 7, 1847 and stating: “Guilday... has the date 1848, but that must be a typographical error, of which there are many in the book.” Bowden, “John Gilmary Shea,” 237.

assistance with publications such as *Relations des Jésuites*. In fact, Shea’s access to Fr. Martin’s document collections in Montreal later inspired some of his own publications, such as the *Cramoisy Series*, relating to early missions in New France and published over thirty years of Shea’s lifetime:

For many years, he had been aware of the collection of Jesuit ‘Relations’ (reports) which his friend Father Felix Martin had assembled at St. Mary’s College, Montreal, and finally in 1855 Shea obtained permission to edit these documents. Entitled the *Cramoisy Series*, honoring Sebastian Cramoisy, who had published in forty volumes the reports covering the period 1632-1672, Shea’s twenty-six ‘supplements,’ which were in the original French appeared regularly from 1857 to 1887.15

Father Martin’s interest in archeology provides a model for his research method: he collected specimens, researched them, and published his notes and observations on them. “As archeologists strove to recover and examine artifacts remaining from past human existence, historians were to turn their attention to the written word.”16 This reliance on primary sources and the knowledge gained from them allies history more closely with science. Martin and Shea did not just tell their readers stories, embellished by snippets of

14 Bowden, “John Gilmary Shea,” 244-245.

15 Gordon, “A Dedication,” 2. Peter Guilday provides a discussion on the series in chapter 4 of *John Gilmary Shea*. His publication specifics on the series are of interest to this paper: “Dr. Shea began the publication of these manuscripts in 1857; and for a period covering thirty years, these little booklets were issued to a chosen number of friends and historical students. One hundred copies only were printed of the two editions which appeared simultaneously, one in octavo and one in duodecimo. The twenty-five volumes published by Shea are now among the *rarissima* of our American libraries.” (55) The Guilday passage demonstrates a bookish interest and an audience accustomed to the language of book publication. Incidentally, because of machine-made paper, the formats Guilday describes which would have been of Shea’s familiarity (octavo and duodecimo), are basically meaningless in the mid-19th-century and beyond, except to indicate one publication size is larger than the other.

fact; they gave us the evidence itself and participated in a movement not only to collect and preserve original materials, but to disseminate them accurately through publication.17

Peter Guilday described Father Martin’s influence on Shea as profound. But Shea had another mentor, equally important in his development as an historian and a collector: Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan. O’Callaghan had gained a reputation for patiently researching documents and records, and was known through his publications as “the historian of the State of New York.”18 O’Callaghan had lectured on the value of studying the Jesuit Relations in 1846, and the New York Historical Society published that lecture in 1847. Based on correspondence, Shea and O’Callaghan were in contact before Shea moved to Montreal; however, even Guilday cannot pinpoint when Shea initiated the correspondence. He believed that it must have been prior to 1850.19 As book collectors, Shea and O’Callaghan will be compared in chapter four. But Guilday considers them as researchers by quoting letters from O’Callaghan to Shea; he also points out that Shea acted as a conduit between O’Callaghan and Father Martin. For example, in an 1850 letter to Shea, O’Callaghan writes:

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18 Guilday, John Gilmary Shea, 20; Gordon, “A Dedication,” 2. O’Callaghan’s publications during Shea’s youth included the History of New Netherland (1846) and The Documentary History of the State of New York (1849-1851).

19 Guilday, John Gilmary Shea, 21. The first letter from O’Callaghan to Shea that is extent in the John Gilmary Shea Papers, Georgetown University Library, was written in 1859. The earliest letter in Guilday’s possession from Shea to O’Callaghan is dated July 16, 1850 and implies a previous correspondence of several years. The first letter to O’Callaghan from Shea extent in the Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, Library of Congress, is dated January 11, 1847; the letter discusses Jesuit Relations and implies an early if not the first correspondence from Shea. Shea signed the letter “John D. Shea;” he had not yet taken on the name, “Gilmary.” Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol. 3, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
P. S. Whenever the French Edition of the Jesuit Relations appears, perhaps
the Author would please let me have a copy. He will find many errors no
doubt in my brochure. But you know under what difficulties it was written.  

And in an 1851 letter, he continues:

I am highly gratified to learn that you have been so fortunate as to
save those very valuable Mss. to which you refer. In regard to
Father Brassani’s Work, I hope I may be considered a subscriber for
half a dozen copies. The revd. Father Martin says it is to appear in
French and English. Am I to understand that the English copies are to
be separate from those in French. Pray let me know this & what the
publication price of each copy is to be.  

Books flowed between them throughout their correspondence. O’Callaghan’s and Shea’s
friendship was long and sustaining in the context of writing and research; just as Father
Martin’s mentorship was fruitful and inspiring in research method and content. Both
teachers guided Shea as a scholar; both mentors informed his role as an historian.

Multiple sources cite health reasons for John Gilmary Shea’s 1852 departure from
the Jesuit novitiate.  Peter Guilday states, “Never robust, though never ailing, his

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20 Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan to John Gilmary Shea, July 16, 1850, quoted in Guilday, John
Gilmary Shea, 22.

21 Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan to John Gilmary Shea, March 11, 1851, quoted in Guilday, John
Gilmary Shea, 23. The Jesuit Relations published in French is listed as catalogue number 377 in E. W.
Nash, Catalogue of the Library of the Late E. B. O’Callaghan, M.D., L.L.D., Historian of New York (New
York: Douglas Taylor, Printer, 1882), 30. It is described as “a scarce translation of a very rare Jesuit
Relation.”

22 Bowden, “John Gilmary Shea,” 238; Gordon, “A Dedication,” 2; Guilday, John Gilmary Shea,
28. Shea’s daughter, Isabel Shea wrote about these decision years later to Father Peter Guilday: “The only
reason, Father game me for leaving the Jesuits, was that he felt he had no vocation for the Society or the
Priesthood and I am sure this is the truth. He had a great love for them, when he died one of the Jesuit . . .
magazine[s] said ‘he was one of us’ and this to me was true, his love for the Society was above even
family.” Emma Isabel Shea to Peter Guilday, October 26, 1925, box 51, folder 2, Peter Guilday Papers,
The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives (hereafter ACUA), The Catholic
University of America, Washington, DC.
friends realized that only the greatest care would carry him to mature manhood."  

By June of 1852, after much spiritual reflection, Shea had made his decision. He swiftly began his life as an historian, publishing scholarly works such as, *Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley* (1852) and *History of the Catholic Missions Among the Indian Tribes of the United States, 1529-1854* (1855) as well as historical works for children, including *An Elementary History of the United States* (1855) and *A School History of the United States* (1855). By 1854, Shea had married Sophie Savage, and their two daughters, Ada and Emma Isabel, followed. His double life had begun: Shea needed to earn their bread as much as he needed to be a scholar, and he did this faithfully over his lifetime. What followed were forty years of scholarship, documented by some two hundred fifty articles and books:

Approximately two hundred and fifty titles were included in the bibliography of his known works, and those who knew Shea well claimed that he also published numerous unsigned articles. Furthermore, over the years Shea’s historical writing proved unremunerative, and he was forced to support himself by working as editor-in-chief of the Frank Leslie publications in New York City—publications which included *Popular Monthly, Chimney Corner*, and *Sunday Magazine.*

Among his later publications, Shea wrote a 480-page history of Georgetown College to celebrate its centenary—the college founded by John Carroll in 1789, about whom Shea had published a biography in 1888. Significantly, Georgetown played an important role in supporting Shea’s magnum opus, *The History of the Catholic Church in the United States,* published in four volumes between 1886 and 1892. (Although Shea had planned

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five volumes, his ill health rendered this impossible.) He signed a complicated agreement with Reverend Joseph Havens Richards, S.J., then president of Georgetown, on February 18, 1892. The agreement essentially stated that Georgetown would purchase 500 sets of Shea’s *History* in exchange for Shea’s library, to include his books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, manuscripts, etc., but to exclude a small number of items of interest to the family.25 On February 22, 1892, John Gilmary Shea died.26

**Section 2: The Georgetown University Library Collection: Its History in Brief**

Of course, there would be a library at John Carroll’s academy:

A library was a necessary adjunct to an institution of learning, and Bishop Carroll, a lover of books himself, made efforts to give Georgetown a proper collection. He was willing to let others share the books he possessed; but, like all lenders, his kindness was sometimes unrequited, for a delving antiquarian has found that the

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25 Georgetown University Archives, Old Archives, box 1, quoted in Lawrence Carleton Chamberlain, “Georgetown University Library, 1789-1937” (master’s thesis, Catholic University of America, 1962), 77. Georgetown agreed to purchase 500 copies of each volume at $5 per volume. Only four volumes were completed, which means that Georgetown paid $10,000 for Shea’s library. The contract itself is in Georgetown University Archives, Old Library, box 1; the main clause states: “That said party of the first part in consideration of the agreements to be performed by the said party of the second part, hereinafter set forth, doth hereby promise and agree to transfer and deliver to the said party of the second part, his whole library of books, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, maps, portraits, views, manuscripts, documents and copies thereof in the manner hereafter set forth. And in this agreement it is understood that there are certain books, manuscripts, and portraits, few in number as compared with the whole collection possessed by the said party of the first part which are not to be considered as belonging to his library for the purposes of this agreement but as family property. What books, manuscripts and portraits in particular are to be thus considered is left by mutual agreement to the judgment of the wife of the said party of the first part, Mrs. Sophie Shea.”

26 As stated, John Gilmary Shea planned five volumes to his history, but he only completed four at the time of his death. The contract was amended in July of 1892: “THIS AGREEMENT THEREFORE WITNESSETH, that the party hereto of the second part agrees to have five hundred full sets of four volumes each of said History printed, bound, shipped and delivered to the party hereto of the first part, not later than October 1st, A.D., 1892, and in addition to the payment of $2,000 already made to said Sophie S. Shea, the said College agrees to pay her the sum of $1,500 not later than November 1st, 1892, the sum of $2,500 in the year 1893, $2,000 in the year 1894 and $2,000 in 1895.” Georgetown University Archives, Old Archives, box 1.
great Archbishop was compelled to advertise on one occasion for the return of a borrowed book.  

In his centenary history of Georgetown, John Gilmary Shea did not go so far as to call the early library at Carroll’s academy insignificant, but he did confess that it was “not very extensive,” occupying only one of the rooms in the old South building. In fact, the space doubled as sleeping quarters for Bishop Neale during his presidency: “he slept there in a press-bed, which was unfolded every night and inclosed [sic] in its case every morning.” After the end of the Revolutionary War, few American college libraries held more than 2,000 volumes, excluding Harvard, which held approximately 12,000 in 1790. Gifts were the heart of these first college libraries, and Georgetown was no exception. John Carroll himself bequeathed a legacy to the college in his 1815 will:

I give and Bequeath . . . to the Rev.d John [Grassi] now President of the College of George Town Columbia and his Heirs four hundred Pounds Sterling in four per cent stock in lieu of one of my Shares in the Potomack Company Stock which I once intended for the College of George Town and it is my will that this Sum of four hundred Pounds Sterling may be sold out and converted into other Stock within the United States so that either the Interest thereof shall serve as a perpetual fund under the direction of the President of said College for augmenting the Library thereof or he may dispose of the Capital itself or any part of it if he can employ it advantageously in the purchase of valuable Books

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28 Ibid., 35.

of real learning and utility suitable to the course of studies pursued in the College.  

In fact, some of Carroll’s own books made their way into Georgetown’s library collections. By 1831, the library had expanded to some 12,000 volumes, which were transferred on February 16 of that year to spacious new quarters in the North (now Old North) building. Father James Van de Velde served at this time as Georgetown’s first recorded librarian.  

Although records document that Father Van de Velde was Georgetown’s librarian, its first official librarian in the modern understanding of the term was Thomas C. Levins, appointed in 1824. At this time, Levins was still a Jesuit, and he also served as professor of mathematics and natural philosophy; Shea termed Levins, “one of the remarkable men of our time.” He left the Society in 1825 and soon after took charge of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York; however, controversy and Levins traveled hand in hand, and what Shea described as his “quick temper” defined Levins’ career. He died in 1843, leaving to Georgetown his valuable book collection of 1,991 volumes (as recorded in 1844 by James Ward), including first editions of Erasmus, important editions of the Bible, important mathematical and scientific works, works of Catholic controversial literature, and eleven incunabula (or books produced in the first fifty years of printing

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30 A copy the “Will of Archbishop John Carroll” is extent in the Maryland Province Archives, box 25, folder 6, on deposit in Georgetown University Library. Father Grassi’s name is bracketed, as the document is deteriorated at this portion.

31 Shea, Memorial of the First Centenary History of Georgetown College, 99.

32 Ibid., 59.
with movable type). Until Georgetown purchased Shea’s collection, Levins’ was the single most significant collection the library had acquired. In the early history of Georgetown University Library, one name needs mentioning at this point: Father Joseph M. Finotti (1817-1879). As a scholastic in 1847, Father Finotti served as librarian briefly, but richly at Georgetown, actually creating a “Manual to the Library” in April of that year. Finotti counted some 13,437 volumes, mapping their physical locations and dividing them by their broad subjects (such as Arts, Ascetics, Bibles, Biographies, Catechisms, Controversies, etc.). Inspired by his collecting experiences at Georgetown, Father Finotti would later compile the first bibliography of Catholic Americana to be published in the United States: *Bibliographia Catholica Americana* (1872). His bibliography listed works by Catholics published in the United States through 1820; a second part was planned but never completed. In fact, Father Finotti had become a collector as well as a bibliographer; and when he died, his friend and fellow bibliographer of Catholic Americana, John Gilmary Shea, documented that collection and arranged its

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33 This catalogue still exists in the University Archives; however, much work is needed to trace the provenance properly of Levins’ collection in Georgetown University Library’s online catalog (GEORGE) accessible worldwide by researchers.

34 Joseph M. Finotti, “Manual to the Library of Georgetown College, March 30, 1847,” Georgetown University Archives, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC, cited in Chamberlain, “Georgetown University Library,” 24. This may well be the last reference to J. M. Finotti’s “Manual,” cited by Chamberlain in 1962 as Georgetown University, shelf number 444.3. This old shelf numbering and subject filing system has been obsolete since prior to the construction of Lauinger Library and the 1970 formulation of what is today the Special Collections Research Center. The current University Archivist has tenaciously searched the University Archives for J. M. Finotti’s “Manual,” as yet to no avail.

35 Ibid.

sale at auction in New York in October of 1879. Many items from Finotti’s collection made their way onto the shelves of both Georgetown’s and Shea’s libraries. In his introduction to the auction catalogue, Shea had the following to say about Finotti’s personal library:

His library as a collection is a peculiar one. The part bearing on the Church of which he was a zealous clergyman, especially the works printed in the last and early in the present century, as well as his collection of newspapers and periodicals, it would be almost impossible to get together again, certainly not without great patience, time and expense…. Up to this time, however, such books have been so generally disregarded that few can be found in any of our public libraries or even the collections of scholars, and opportunities like the present will rarely occur.

Shea echoes this paragraph in his 1891 Catholic News editorial (quoted above), albeit his 1891 take contained more acrimony. The passage of time and the poignant realization that his own collection might be so dispersed changed his tone, even when he must have known that Georgetown had acquired many items from Finotti’s collection. Thus, the Catholic Americana collection that Finotti had begun as young librarian at Georgetown grew with Georgetown’s interest in preserving his personal collection for scholars; and Georgetown’s purchase of item’s from Finotti’s collection of books foreshadowed its pursuit of Shea’s.

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37 Bangs and Company, Catalogue of the Library of the Late Rev. Joseph M. Finotti (New York: Bangs and Company, 1879), iv. This particular copy in the holdings of the Rare Books Collections, Georgetown University Library, is annotated with sale prices. It is unclear whether this may have been Shea’s own copy or a copy that survived through the years as a part of the University Archives.

38 Ibid.

39 Chamberlain, “Georgetown University Library,” 24. This information may be anecdotal, as Chamberlain does not give a specific source. He states: “The catalog of his [Finotti’s] library printed for the auction contained 1,492 entries. At this time Georgetown acquired many of them.”
Throughout much of its early history, Georgetown’s library was not open to students. In fact, its collections did not circulate to students until into the twentieth century. Thus, students, societies, and seminar libraries were created, mainly by the students themselves. These libraries continued even after the opening of the Riggs Memorial Library in 1891, including the Seminar Libraries for Philosophy, English, Political Science, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, and Astronomy (in the Georgetown College Observatory). In 1874, students considered merging their societies’ libraries into one, thus increasing their usefulness; and by 1884 the aggregation had occurred. Senior Division students could subscribe for access to the Societies’ Reading Room. In the meantime, Georgetown’s main library had outgrown its space in the (old) North Building. And at Georgetown’s centennial in 1889, the space in Healy Hall that had long been reserved for a new library, had finally found its patron in E. Francis Riggs. In his Centenary History of Georgetown (1891), Shea describes the state-of-the-art space in great detail:

This library is being constructed on the latest and most improved system, the stories between the gallery floors being slightly over seven feet high, so that the librarian can reach any book without aid of ladder or stool. . . . The ceiling is made of galvanized iron, but really resolves itself into a group of skylights of which the ceiling portion is merely the frame. . . . the book shelves will be of California red wood, and the standard castings will admit the free adjustment in height of the book shelves to suit the

40 Ibid., 88-89.


42 Shea, Memorial of the First Centenary History of Georgetown College, 313-314.
height of books. Special provision has been made in the lower alcoves for folios. The library will have a capacity for 105,000 volumes.\footnote{Ibid., 314.}

Because it was not made of wood, but “galvanized iron,” the Riggs Library was essentially fireproof; or as fireproof as nineteenth-century architecture could make it.

This was a time of great expansion to Georgetown’s library; this was the time marked by the acquisition of John Gilmary Shea’s own remarkable personal library.

In the 1930s, Reverend Joseph Wilfred Parsons, S.J. (1887-1958) found many examples of rare Catholic Americana on the library shelves at Georgetown and in Healy Hall’s attic; treasures amassed by collectors like Father Finotti and John Gilmary Shea. As a result, he continued the bibliographical work of Finotti and Shea, who together had started to revise Finotti’s bibliography; and in 1939, Parsons published *Early Catholic Americana*, greatly expanding upon Finotti’s and Shea’s work. Shea’s collection continues to influence scholars and scholarship. John Gilmary Shea wished for his book collection to be kept together and made available for future researchers: “I should like to see it in some Catholic Institution where it would be preserved and increased.”\footnote{Guilday, *John Gilmary Shea*, 134.} That wish is now a reality, as his collection is frequently used, and the subjects Shea collected still influence library acquisitions at Georgetown. His collection has not been “scattered to the winds.” On the contrary, it serves as documentary resources for today’s researchers, and it will continue to be preserved and increased for scholars to come.
CHAPTER TWO
COLLECTORS AND COLLECTING IN CONTEXT

Itaque cum legere non possis, quantum haburesis, satis est habere, quantum legas.¹
— Seneca, Epistulae ad Lucilium

Section 1: The Book Collector

Famed bibliographer Thomas Frognall Dibdin (1776-1847) first documented the disease in his oft-cited 1809 epistle to Richard Heber: Bibliomania; or, Book-Madness.² The underpinnings of this extremely odd essay made a case for the antiquarian collectors of his day, of the past, and paved the way for those to come. But greater than this, Dibdin framed a principled procedure for examining the books themselves whenever embarking upon the task of bibliography. By the time of its second edition in 1811, Dibdin had swelled his theme over eight-fold (from 92 pages in 1809 to 796 in 1811). However, Dibdin did not coin the term “bibliomania.”³ The OED defines it as, “a rage for collecting and possessing books,” and claims that the term was first used in 1734 by Thomas Hearne in his diary, when he described the temptation of possessing items from the sale of Thomas Rawlinson’s library.⁴ Chesterfield warned against it in a 1750 letter, “Beware of the Bibliomanie”; and Thomas Jefferson claimed that he “labored grievously under the malady of Bibliomanie” and therefore strove not to purchase extravagantly

¹ Bernhard Metz, “Bibliomania and the Folly of Reading,” Comparative and Critical Studies 5.2-3 (2008): 249. Metz provides the following translation: “Accordingly, since you cannot read all the books which you may possess, it is enough to possess only as many books as you can read.” (264, n. 2)

² Thomas Frognall Dibdin, The Bibliomania; or, Book Madness; Containing Some Account of this Fatal Disease in an Epistle to Richard Heber, Esq. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1809).


⁴ Ibid.
priced books. The jejune initiate, the young book collector, could be struck at any time with this grave malady!

Prior to Dibdin’s essay, British writer Isaac D’Israeli published—at first anonymously—*Curiosities of Literature*; in its multiple editions, he described the phenomenon of bibliomania. Here is an excerpt from the first edition:

The Bibliomania, or the collecting an enormous heap of books, has long been the rage for some who would fain pass themselves upon us as men of vast erudition. Some, indulging in this luxury of literature, desirous of forming an immense and curious library, have scoured all Europe, and sent out travellers to the Indies to discover ancient books, or scarce manuscripts. This has occasioned many cheats and impositions. Towards the end of the last century some ignorant or knavish men sent to Paris a number of Arabic manuscripts, in excellent condition and clear characters. They were received with all imaginable respect by the eager collectors of books; they were rapidly purchased at high price: but, lo! when they were examined by the connoisseurs, these manuscripts, which were held so inestimable, were discovered to be books of accounts and registers, cleanly transcribed by certain Arabian merchants.  

—Rifum teneatis, Amici!

Yes, we can but laugh! As time passed, however, D’Israeli’s view of the bibliomaniac (i.e., the book collector) acerbically devolved; compare the above passage with the 5th edition (published sixteen years later in 1807) of *Curiosities*:

The Bibliomania, or the collecting of enormous heaps of Books, without intelligent curiosity; has, since Libraries have existed, been the rage with some, who would fain pass themselves on us as men of vast erudition. Their motley Libraries have been called the Madhouses of the human Mind; and again, the Tomb of Books when the possessor will not communicate them, and coffins them up on the cases of his Library—putting, as was facetiously observed, a Lock

5 Ibid.

The *Bibliomania* has never raged more violently than in the present day. It is fortunate that Literature is in no ways injured by the follies of Collectors, since though they preserve the worthless, they necessarily defend the good.

Some collectors place all their fame on the *view* of a splendid Library, where volumes arrayed in all the pomp of lettering, silk linings, triple gold bands and tinted leather, are locked up in wire-cases, and secured from the vulgar hands of the mere *Reader*, dazzling our eyes like Eastern Beauties peering through their jealousies!

There is a difference between collecting and using books, and this is exactly D’Israeli’s point in both instances. In the more subtle first, he describes the anecdote of the Arabic manuscripts. They are only valuable in the minds of the collector; they strike awe in the imaginations of researchers, but only until they are used and revealed as scholastic nonsense. Gustave Flaubert runs with D’Israeli’s theme in his 1836 play, *Bibliomanie*.

In the play, Giacomo, an essentially illiterate book seller (read here book miser), longs for his next great treasure: a copy of the oldest book printed in Spain; but only to have and not to use.8

For this book madness, even Thomas Frognall Dibdin could not outline a definitive cure; however, he could glibly suggest five *probable* cures, stated below as the text appears in the 1809 edition:

> In the *first place*, the disease of Bibliomania is materially softened, or rendered mild, by directing our studies to *useful* and *profitable* works—whether these be printed upon small or large paper, in the gothic, roman, or italic type!...

> In the *second place*, the reprinting of scarce and intrinsically valuable works is another means of preventing the propagation of this disorder. . . .


8 Bernhard Metz provides a recent and detailed discussion on this theme in “Bibliomania and the Folly of Reading,” *Comparative and Critical Studies* 5.2-3 (2008): 249-269.
In the third place, the editing of our best ancient authors, whether in prose or poetry . . . is another means of effectually countering the progress of Bibliomania, as it has been described under its several symptoms.

In the fourth place, the erection of Public Institutions (70) is a very powerful antidote against the prevalence of several symptoms of this disease.

In the fifth place, the encouragement of the study of Bibliography . . . in its legitimate sense, and towards its true object, may be numbered among the most efficacious cures for this destructive malady.10

Dibdin satirically described a psychotic disorder and pointed to “probable” cures: look to the content and not to the shell; purchase reprints; purchase modern editions of classical works, and do not attempt to edit them from the original; use the public collections available rather than building your own; and become a bibliographer rather than a collector. In other words, be sensible about the books you purchase, if you must purchase them at all. Of course, Dibdin collected books at the bid of his patron, the second Earl of Spencer, who was an extravagant bibliomaniac.11 As such, Dibdin himself did not need to show the self-restraint he prescribed, however satirically.

Perhaps collecting in general is a universal psychosis. When G. Thomas Tanselle explored the psychology of collecting, he related to any given person’s emotional connection with things:

When one tries to identify human needs, one is bound to hear, in the back of one's mind, Lear's ‘Oh, reason not the need’: the possessions

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9 Dibdin’s note 70 in his first (1809) edition of the farce reads: “(70) The Royal, London, Surry, and Russel Institutions have been the means of concentrating, in divers parts of the metropolis, large libraries of useful books; which, it is to be hoped, will eventually suppress the establishment of what are called Circulating Libraries—vehicles too often, of insufferable nonsense, and irremediable mischief!”

10 Dibdin, Bibliomania (1809), 76-79.

11 Willes, Reading Matters, 172.
not strictly necessary for bodily survival nevertheless may seem required for establishing a sense of human identity and defining one's place in the world. Nomadic tribes and homeless street-people have their possessions; and those persons or families who lose their accumulated store of objects through fires, storms, robberies, and other catastrophes generally find that their feelings of good fortune in still being alive are naggingly tempered by their sense of deprivation, since they are not as fully alive without the objects that they had made part of their existence. . . . It is unwise, then, to complicate a definition of collecting with the idea of need – not only because need is so difficult to pin down but also, and more significantly, because all forms of amassing objects can in fact be necessities of life, if the role of emotional well-being in physical survival is adequately taken into account. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to claim . . . that the possession of objects is for everyone an essential element of life-support.  

At its most basic, Tanselle provides a rationale for “the amassing of tangible things”; that is, for collecting. As individuals, we may collect deeply and personally, and without the psychosis of collecting, there would be no preservation of the primary sources of knowledge; there would be no conveying of the past into the future. 

Is it possible that the collector is the antithesis of the scholar? “The bibliomaniac is the counterpart of the scholar; he is the oppressed and excluded other of scholarship” says Bernhard Metz, since the bibliomaniac does not necessarily care to read the books he collects, but to point out to others their bibliographic minutia, such as large paper copies, black letter type, excessively wide margins, and luxurious book bindings. Someone needed to defend the idea of obtaining books to read, to use; and that someone

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13 Ibid., 1. 
was the twentieth-century librarian, and especially the public librarian. Nevertheless, by
the twentieth-century, bibliophile collectors were king. And as such, many, many public
institutions sought their valuable collections as the treasure troves aggregated into the
(twentieth-century) modern idea of “special collections.” Coddle the collector by all
means, advised historian and specialized librarian Randolph G. Adams in his notorious
1937 addendum to William Blades’ classic, *The Enemies of Books*—with promises of
preservation and air-conditioned collections and time.15 Randolph Adams could not
advocate the concept of a book as a commodity for the reading public, regardless of the
symbiotic relationship between libraries and publishers that existed then and will always
exist. In truth, Adams valued the collector over the reader at a time when the trend in
librarianship was towards service to readers above all else. But to Adams, what did it
matter what the reader wanted? For him, the bibliophile alone spoke for the books, as the
books could not speak for themselves. However romantic a notion, some good came
from this coddling of collectors, and important books have been preserved for the use of
future readers.

So where does this book madness lead us? Let us take a step back into Thomas
Dibdin’s world for a bit and consider some collectors of old. Bibliomania was not
possible without the first documented book collectors; and among these, was a collector
possibly appreciated by John Gilmary Shea: Bishop Richard de Bury (1287-1345), who
amassed a great library of several hundred manuscripts and wrote about his “love of

317-331.
books” in his influential work, the *Philobiblon*. Although he had planned to endow a college at Oxford University and create a library of his books, his debts at his death rendered this wish impossible; and ultimately his great library was sold by his executors.\textsuperscript{16} The *Philobiblon* saw numerous editions in the early centuries of printing during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the nineteenth century, John Gilmary Shea owned a contemporary reprint of the work, published in Latin and English.\textsuperscript{17} For Bury, books held treasure:

> In fine, since all men naturally desire to know, and since by all means of books we can attain the knowledge of the ancients, which is to be desired beyond all riches, what man living according to nature would not feel the desire of books? And although we know that swine tramples pearls under foot, the wise man will not therefore be deterred from gathering the pearls that lie before him. A library of wisdom, then, is more precious than all wealth, and all things that are desirable cannot be compared to it. Whoever therefore claims to be zealous of truth, of happiness, of wisdom or knowledge, aye even of the faith, must needs become a lover of books.\textsuperscript{18}

Bury documented the universal need to utilize books in order to gain knowledge.

Although Shea’s copy was not the first edition in English, it was the first published in the United States, actually making it doubly desirable: as a document of Catholic Americana and as a justification for bibliophiles. Richard de Bury collected books; but in the period

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\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 168.
of the manuscript, books were precious, books were rare, and most of all, books were unique. In the Renaissance, books changed.

Is it possible today to understand genuinely the impact of printing in its infancy? In truth, there were varied and complicated ways of seeing during the Renaissance. After the invention of printing with moveable type (circa 1455) came the possibility of wide dissemination of knowledge. This did not happen overnight. And for the printed image, it became acceptable during the Renaissance to depict even the sacred as natural; an image of the sacred was not necessarily suffused with the sacred. Equally as important, printed texts and images made it possible—for the first time in the Western world—for many people to experience individually, and in the privacy of their own homes, the same thing. Books are common; books were not common.

Statesmen, artists, scholars, kings, and even printmakers were among the great Renaissance humanists; they participated in a cultural movement wholly different from the medieval antecedent. Regarding Renaissance book production that followed the ideology of Renaissance humanism, few individuals were as significant as French government official Jean Grolier (circa 1489-1565), who entertained at his dinner table intellectuals who could influence and produce the types of books he wished to collect. The legend of Grolier’s collection is that it was incredibly vast for his time, with as many as 3,000 volumes and “all in gilt bindings”; however, historical bibliography has proven that the number of inaccurate associations as well as fakes renders this figure as
doubtful. But it is certain that Jean Grolier continues to inspire the collectors of today. A slightly later Renaissance collector did amass an almost unbelievably large collection for its time: Jacques-Auguste de Thou’s collection of 8,000 volumes. Like John Gilmary Shea, Thou (1553-1616), also known as Thuanus, built his collection to support his research, culminating in his great five-volume history (*Historia sui Temporis*), published between 1604 and 1620, with the last volume published posthumously. As a collector, Thou received an entry in the 1811 expanded edition of Thomas Dibdin’s *Bibliomania*:

**THUANUS. [DE THOU]** *Bibliothecæ Thuanæ Catalogue*, Parisiis, 1679, 8vo. ‘Three particular reasons. . . should induce us to get possession of this catalogue: first, the immortal glory acquired by De Thou in writing his history, and in forming the most perfect and select library of his age: secondly, the abundance and excellence of the books herein specified; and thirdly, the great credit of the bibliographers Du Puys and Quesnel, by whom the catalogue was compiled.’ . . . The books of De Thou, whose fame will live as long as a book shall be read, were generally beautiful in condition, with his arms stamped upon the exterior of the binding, which was usually of Morocco; and from some bibliographical work . . . I learn that this binding cost the president not less than 20,000 crowns. De Thou’s copy of the editio princeps of Homer, is now in the British Museum. . . . For an account of the posterior fate of De Thou’s library, consult the article, Soubise,’ ante. I should add

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19 Anthony Hobson, *Renaissance Book Collecting: Jean Grolier and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, Their Books and Bindings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5. Hobson also states, “Gabriel Austin’s invaluable census of books that belonged to the Treasurer [Grolier] is entitled ‘The Library of Jean Grolier’. In fact Grolier never owned all the books listed there at the same time. What Austin recorded is the remains of three successive libraries: the Milanese library, lost as least in part in 1512 or 1521; the first French library, dispersed by forced sale in 1536; and the final library.” (69) And for more information about humanists and their book collections, refer to Anthony Hobson, *Humanists and Binders: The Origins and Diffusion of the Humanistic Bookbinding, 1459-1559* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Hobson not only details the art history of Renaissance bindings; he discusses at length what writers wrote and what collectors sought.


that, according to the *Bibl. Solgeriana*, vol. iii. p. 243, nº. 1431, there are copies of this catalogue upon LARGE PAPER.  

His library was so important, that even its catalogue became a luxurious commodity. An early nineteenth-century biographer describes Thou’s library:

> But our Historian especially promoted the cause of letters by furnishing a library, which, in the points of magnificence and judicious selection, has, perhaps, never been surpassed by private collection. It was called the Parnassus of the Muses, and was so celebrated that it has been said, those who has not seen the library of Thuanus, has not seen Paris. He was employed forty years in making this collection, which consisted of eight thousand volumes. This must have been an ample number at that period, and they were of the most rare and excellent kind, procured throughout Europe at an immense expense, and all bound in a sumptuous manner. There were besides about a thousand manuscripts of great value.

Jacques-Auguste de Thou was a Renaissance man of great energy and deep learning; his library documented his lifetime of scholarship.

Although their lives overlapped with Dibdin’s, two great collectors of the Enlightenment are beyond the scope of his study. Their lives and architectural interests were closely contemporaneous, yet they lived literally an ocean away from each other: Sir John Soane (1753-1837) and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826). Remember that Isaac D’Israeli bemoaned that “the Bibliomania has never raged more violently than” in his

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22 Dibdin, *Bibliomania* (1811), 129-130. The octavo *Catalogus Bibliothecae Thuanae* (Paris, 1679) described by Dibdin is a rare book in itself, with approximately twenty copies listed in WorldCat and only two in the United States. One of these copies is in the Grolier Club in New York.


24 Dibdin’s chronological study of bibliophiles did not enter far into the nineteenth century, and both Soane and Jefferson lived into the first quarter of the nineteenth century.
own time,\textsuperscript{25} the time of Soane and Jefferson. While entire books can be written (and have been) on the collecting habits of both Soane and Jefferson, for the purposes of this examination, they are comparable due to their shared ability to overcome challenges to building great libraries. Soane did not begin his life as a person of means; his bricklayer father furthered his family’s poverty by persistent financial troubles.\textsuperscript{26} In addition, Soane confronted a dismal educational system that favored the rich and offered the poor the status quo at best. However, Soane’s family kept him in school beyond his siblings, due especially to his fondness for reading; and though little is known as to how, Soane was sent to a private school in Reading run by William Baker, who incidentally also educated Thomas Frognall Dibdin.\textsuperscript{27} Soane ran with his educational opportunities and succeeded professionally as an architect. His early penchant for books became his lifelong passion, and at the end of his life, he endowed a museum and library to be created from his house and collections. His library still benefits the readers of today.\textsuperscript{28}

For Thomas Jefferson, collecting difficulties were not from a lack of financial means or educational opportunity; they were the result of geographic location as well as governmental upheavals caused certainly by wars with Britain, but also the politically charged period of time known as the founding era of the United States. Book production and distribution are businesses; and early America was a great big challenge to the trade.

\textsuperscript{25} D’Israeli, \textit{Curiosities of Literature} (1807), 10.

\textsuperscript{26} Willes, \textit{Reading Matters}, 109.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 111.

The typical seventeenth-century Colonial American family owned one book: the Bible. Nevertheless, books, pamphlets, and periodicals did flow between the continents, and by the eighteenth century, indefatigable American readers of means could build libraries. Thomas Jefferson built three. Fire, one of the greatest and most permanent enemies of books, destroyed Jefferson’s first collection of around three or four hundred books in his family home and before they could be moved to Monticello. About the fire, Jefferson wrote to a friend:

My late loss may have perhaps reached you by this time, I mean the loss of my mother’s house by fire, and in it, of every paper I had in the world, and almost every book. On a reasonable estimate I calculate the cost of the books burned to have been £200 sterling. Would to god it had been the money; then had it never cost me a sigh!  

And so, the collecting began anew; Jefferson expanded his collection to more than 6,000 volumes by 1812: “one of the great private libraries of the United States.” Then fire struck again, but this time it burned the Library of Congress when the British set fire to Washington, D.C. in 1814; Thomas Jefferson’s private library was ready to fill the loss. Since Jefferson “could not live without books,” he continued to collect; by the time of his


30 Ibid., 102.

31 Ibid., 103. Congress paid Jefferson $23,950 in 1815; a bulk price calculated according to volume size: “$1 for octavos and duodecimos, $3 for quartos, $10 for folios;” Jefferson used the money to pay off debts. (103) Fire has been the curse of Jefferson’s collections, striking again at the Capitol in 1851, and destroying a large portion of Jefferson’s library. Today, the Library of Congress is working to rebuild the library Jefferson sold to Congress in 1815, some 6,487 volumes. For more information on the progress of this project, visit Library of Congress Exhibitions, “Jefferson’s Library,” Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/jefflib.html (accessed October 26, 2010).
death his “retirement library” had exceeded 1,000 volumes. Like Jean Grolier, Thomas Jefferson’s three libraries have become a bibliophilic marvel. Sir John Soane and Thomas Jefferson both lived into the nineteenth century; however, they did not live to realize the effect of expanded and more universally affordable book production.

Section 2: The Nineteenth-Century Collector

Like in the Renaissance, book production changed in the nineteenth century. Although scholars have disputed the accreditation of printing with moveable type, history now accepts Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz as the inventor and gives an estimated invention year of 1455. Essentially, Gutenberg helped to develop metal letters (or type) that could be placed in word order in a metal forme, inked, and pressed so that the impression of words on a page would be left behind on a sheet of paper. The use of metal type over wood increased the clarity of the words and also the lifespan of the type. The wooden pressure press (known as the Common Press) used to produce the Gutenberg Bible was the variety of press used for relief printing until 1801, the year of Lord Stanhope’s metal press. Eventually steam printing became king, especially for the

32 Ibid., 106. Incidentally, Georgetown University Library holds several bound volumes once belonging to Thomas Jefferson, mostly donated by Jefferson’s descendant, Burwel S. Randolph.


34 Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 262. The Earl of Stanhope (1753-1816) patented his iron press in 1798. The impact of Lord Stanhope’s press is a matter of dispute among scholars. For example, the great literary scholar Richard Altick minimizes its impact by stating that “while reducing the labor involved in printing” Stanhope’s press “failed to improve the rate of production.” (262) But this statement must be considered from all sides. For example, for most of the history of book production, labor was cheap and materials were expensive. This supports Altick’s assessment; nevertheless, the Times (London) was able to reduce the effort to print pages by half with the introduction of the iron press: the Common Press (wooden) needed two pulls to print a page; Stanhope’s iron press needed only one. Even when labor is cheap, a reduction in effort by as much
production of serials; but until James Watt’s patent ran out in the early 19th century, steam presses were not economical. Stanhope did not desire profit from his invention; he wished to advance technology. But improved printing production alone did not produce the deluge of accessible books during the nineteenth century. Paper is a large part of the story.

When British publisher Charles Knight looked slightly back in 1854 on the technological changes brought about by machine printing, he believed that hand labor alone could never have supplied the steadily increasing demand for reading material across the masses:

If the demand for knowledge had led to the establishment of the ‘Penny Magazine’ before the improvement of printing, it is probable that the sale of twenty thousand copies would have been considered the utmost that could have been calculated upon. One thousand perfect copies could only have been daily produced at one press by the labour of two men. The machine produces sixteen thousand copies.35

But he also propounded the advances in science—specifically chemistry—that allowed paper to be produced from such everyday things as the pulp of old rags. The fourdrinier machine, patented in 1807 by Henry Fourdrinier, is a massive machine that can produce large rolls of paper in a short period of time. Prior to this, handmade paper took manual labor to produce. And even though the labor was cheap, the taxation was tremendous; paper was the most expensive part of book production from Gutenberg into the nineteenth

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century. Knight remarked that: “Science made paper cheap in spite of taxation. The
government has worked hard to keep books dear.”36 The repeal of the paper excise duty
in Britain in 1861 removed a barrier in the production of inexpensive books. A ream of
five hundred sheets of paper in the 1840s cost about 24 shillings, taxed. After 1861, the
price reduced to about 10 shillings.37 Paper became half price. As one literary historian
commented, “the combination of cheap paper and mechanical printing was the greatest
step forward in book production since Caxton.”38 And in addition to cheaper paper and
mechanized printing, even the book bindings became machine-made.39

Of the pioneers of inexpensive books in the nineteenth century, few were as
innovative and respected as Charles Knight (1791-1873).40 A proponent of the Society
for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, Knight worked tirelessly to bring quality reading
material to everyone: “Unlike many of his fellow workers in the cheap-literature field, he
was a moderate, tolerant man who wished simply to make the printed page the agent of
peace, justice, and pleasure.”41 Knight inherently understood that the average working
man could not afford publications priced in guineas, pounds, or dollars; but he could

36 Ibid., 258.

37 John Springhall, “‘Disseminating Impure Literature’ the Penny Dreadful Publishing Business,”


39 Altick, _The English Common Reader_, 278. The machine-made case binding became the
standard from the 1830s onward. Publishers were able to sell their books already bound, rather than in
sheets, wrappers, or boards, thus reducing the cost for the wholesaler and the consumer.

40 Ibid., 281-283.

41 Ibid., 281.
afford pennies. Thus, the *Penny Magazine*, the *Penny Cyclopaedia* (published week after alphabetical week), and even the *Penny Shakespeare* were conceived. Consider the very first article of the first number of the *Penny Magazine*; “READING FOR ALL”:

What the stage-coach has become to the middle-classes, we hope our Penny Magazine will become to all classes—a universal convenience and enjoyment. The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge have considered it proper to commence this publication, from the belief that many persons, whose time and whose means are equally limited, may be induced to purchase and to read it. . . . But there are a great number of persons who can spare half an hour for the reading of a newspaper, who are sometimes disinclined to open a book. For these we shall endeavor to prepare a useful and entertaining Weekly Magazine, that may be taken up and laid down without requiring any considerable effort. 

Knight created in the nineteenth century our modern equivalent of general interest reading. The main requirement was that published material should be used, should be read; and this is the antithesis of the bibliomania documented by Dibdin!

Richard Altick—who described with empathy the life and impact of Charles Knight—published a seminal work, *The English Common Reader*, that resonates today. Although, the phrase “common reader” may have been an anachronism, Altick’s description, taken from Samuel Johnson’s assessment of an eighteenth-century poem, is useful in documenting the era, if not the specific reader. Remember, that the nineteenth

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42 Charles Knight, “Reading for All,” *The Penny Magazine* (March 31, 1832): 1. Incidentally, Society Libraries at Georgetown College, such as the Philodemic Society, subscribed to the American edition of the *Penny Magazine*—published almost simultaneously in New York by J. S. Redfield—from its first number onward. The magazine filled a needed void for general interest reading material, and as such, attracted college students as well as the working classes for whom Knight aimed his publications.

century saw the publication of great bibliographies, the work of painstaking documenters like Father Joseph M. Finotti, E. B. O’Callaghan, and John Gilmary Shea: that is, archivist historians relied on the facts alone, “the irrefutable, dispassionate character of primary source materials carried such weight . . . that they [archivists] became reluctant to interject any private observations at all.” And such “common readers” lead to the Common Collector; the collector who uses his books for research; who reads his books for the sake of scholarship. These are the collectors represented by John Gilmary Shea. Dibdin, a bibliographer himself, encouraged the study of bibliography as a cure for bibliomania. But this was not necessarily a cure for collecting, as demonstrated by collectors like Finotti, O’Callaghan, and Shea. Such collectors were not men of great financial means. They did not collect simply to own a large paper copy, an example of black letter type, a luxuriously bound book. They were not book-mad for its own sake. They were, as their collections testify, scholars of great determination.

Thomas Frognall Dibdin’s cure for bibliomania moved from probable to possible as the nineteenth century progressed. Affordable quality reading material became a reality. However, there were certainly a number of penny “dreadfuls” and a tremendous demand for them: even Charles Dickens read the outpourings of the penny press in his youth. Nevertheless, ventures such as Charles Knight’s produced useful general

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45 Dickens told his contemporary, John Forster (1812-1876), “I used when I was at school, to take in the Terrific Register, making myself unspeakably miserable, and frightening my very wits out of my head for the small change of a penny weekly; which considering that there was an illustration to every number, in which there was always a pool of blood, and at least one body, was cheap.” John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (London, 1872), quoted in Richard Altick, *Victorian Studies in Scarlet* (London: Norton, 1970), 71-72.
interest publications that could be enjoyed by all. Additionally, reprints of eighteenth-century literature abounded, and the fiction of the time captured this in snapshot. For example, Jane Eyre remembered her nurse Bessie telling stories “from the pages of Pamela.”

And the character Betteridge in Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* viewed almost everything through the lens of *Robinson Crusoe*:

You are not to take it, if you please, as the saying of an ignorant old man, when I express my opinion that such a book as Robinson Crusoe never was written, and never will be written again. I have tried that book for years—generally in combination with a pipe of tobacco—and I have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life. When my spirits are bad—Robinson Crusoe. When I want advice—Robinson Crusoe. In past times, when my wife plagued me; in present times when I have had a drop too much—Robinson Crusoe. I have worn out six stout Robinson Crusoes with hard work in my service. On my lady’s last birthday she gave me a seventh. I took a drop too much on the strength of it; and Robinson Crusoe put me right again. Price four shillings and sixpence, bound in blue, with a picture into the bargain.

According to Charles Knight—as Betteridge reveals—among the general public, a book that was both physically attractive and good was much better than a mere good book. Books lived in the minds of readers; but until the nineteenth century, those readers were as exclusive as the books they collected. As the two cited editions of nineteenth-century British literature—*Jane Eyre* (Leipzig, 1848) and *The Moonstone* (New York, 1868)—demonstrate, books flowed between Britain, the United States, and the Continent, and with the ease of nineteenth-century technological advances. Later in the century


historical societies formed, with missions “to collect, preserve, and diffuse the materials” of history. Authors like Shea followed Knight’s example for “diffusing knowledge” through affordable publication: by disseminating primary source materials previously only attainable either at great expense through purchase or through travel to scattered and distant archival repositories. And in turn, affordable nineteenth-century publications were what comprised the bulk of Shea’s own library collection. As his collection will demonstrate, he was a collector of his time.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN GILMARY SHEA’S COLLECTION AS EVIDENCED BY HIS CATALOG

The library will find an appropriate home in the oldest Catholic College in the United States.
—"The Shea Library," Georgetown College Journal

Often, catalogs chronicle great library collections. These can be the result of the painstaking work of bibliographers and librarians over the course of several years; or they can be the listings of items for sale by booksellers, culling items from several past owners. A common type of catalog for recording private collections is the auction catalogue, and the typical time to create them is at the dispersal of collections shortly after the owner’s death.¹ But this is not the only scenario: “Many libraries have been sold, sometimes in part and sometimes in their entirety, during their owners’ lifetimes, for a variety of reasons including financial impecunity, shortage of space, or boredom.”² Remember, Thomas Jefferson had sold his second library for financial reasons to Congress, after the Library of Congress had burned in 1814. Congress based their decision to purchase it on the assessment of his collection by a Congressional committee,³ and in 1815 the third Librarian of Congress prepared a Catalogue of the Library of the United States from an 1812 Jefferson manuscript.⁴ No matter the reason for the sale, the catalog documents what the owner collected. For example, two sales


² Ibid.

³ Willes, Reading Matters, 103.

⁴ A copy of Catalogue of the Library of the United States: To which is Annexed, a Copious Index, Alphabetically Arranged (Washington, DC: Printed for William Elliot, 1815) resides in the Georgetown College Collection (the original library of Georgetown University), at shelf mark O 132.
catalogs list the collections of John Gilmary Shea’s friends and fellow collectors: 


After the success of *The Life and Times of Archbishop Carroll* (volume two of the *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*), Reverend J. Havens Richards, S. J., thirty-first president of Georgetown College, informed Shea that College authorities would confer a medal of honor upon him. The year was 1889; the centenary of the founding of Archbishop John Carroll’s college. And with the honor of the medal, Richards suggested that Shea write a history of that college: Shea’s *Memorial of the First Centenary of Georgetown* (1891). 5 This reinforced Shea’s relationship with Richards and with Georgetown. And this relationship initiated the complicated negotiations that resulted in the College’s purchase of John Gilmary Shea’s library.

There is some discrepancy as to the actual size of Shea’s collection. For example, a notice in the February 1892 issue of the *Georgetown College Journal* stated the following:

> We are pleased to state that the grand historical library of the late Dr. John Gilmary Shea will come to Georgetown. When it became known about a year ago that the library was for sale the Reverend President appealed to some friends and alumni for aid. They responded generously enough to warrant entering upon negotiations for it. Dr. Shea some days before his death signed the final contract by which Georgetown, for a consideration that was satisfactory to him, became the owner of the library. The conditions are such that the collection may be considered as

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almost a gift to the College.

Containing about 10,000 printed books, valuable manuscripts and pamphlets relating to the early history of the Church in America, a line of Bibles from the beginning of printing, a number of books in Spanish, and a unique collection of Indian dialects, the library will find an appropriate home in the oldest Catholic College in the United States and a worthy resting place amid other storied learning in the magnificent Riggs Memorial Library.6

In 1940, Father Wilfred Parsons described Shea’s collection as “the famous Shea Collection, with its 8,000 volumes and many thousands of manuscripts.”7 However, Henry Warner Bowden stated in 1968: “By the 1880’s some estimate his library to have contained over 20,000 books, pamphlets, and manuscripts, many of which are the only known still to exist.”8 Here, Bowden references John Paul Cadden’s early historiography of American Catholic history and his devotion of an entire chapter to Shea. In the context of discussing the culmination of Shea’s career as a Catholic historian—the writing of his History—Cadden had stated that Shea “possessed . . . a library of over twenty thousand books, pamphlets, and manuscripts of which he had in many instances the only known copy”; however, Cadden does not cite a source.9 In fact, Bowden footnotes Cadden’s statement with: “This estimate seems too large and does not agree with Shea’s own statement . . . The American Antiquarian Society possesses a copy of entries in Shea’s

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6 “The Shea Library,” Georgetown College Journal 20 (February 1892): 107. By this estimate, if 10,000 volumes—no matter how Shea counted—were the true sum, then the College paid roughly one dollar per volume. Considering the collection, this was indeed “almost a gift.”

7 Georgetown University Library, The Georgetown University Library Miniatures Commemorating the Tercentenary of Its Founding, 1640-1940 (Baltimore: Thomsen-Ellis-Hutton Company, 1940), 41.


9 Cadden, Historiography of the American Catholic Church, 242.
library, and that list includes approximately 2,763 volumes with some duplicate titles.”

Bowden had apparently examined the “Catalog” himself. By 1891, Shea knew that he needed to sell his library to support his family as well as underwrite the publication of his life’s work: *The History of the Catholic Church in the United States*. On September 6, 1891, Shea wrote to Richards:

> My health declining and my ability to earn diminishing, I must soon fall back on my books and make them give me an income. A cash offer of $10,000 was made to me from Philadelphia, backed by an Abbot, but I declined it. I cannot [give] a cash valuation without completing my catalogue, pricing it, and having it priced by an expert.  

John Gilmary Shea did not have the chance to complete his catalog. His health had failed, and his family needed.

In his biography of Shea, Father Peter Guilday published a long, undated letter that Shea likely wrote in 1891 to his friend Father John J. Dougherty. Shea wrote to Dougherty as an advocate for keeping his library in the northeast, especially New York or New Jersey; in the letter, Shea provides details on the scope and span of his collection as he viewed it himself. To date, this letter stands as one of the few printed “catalogues” of Shea’s collection. It is worthwhile to examine it here in the context of a more detailed exploration of the collection; it is also worthwhile to showcase the collection in Shea’s own words, as a testament to his exhaustive work as a bibliographer, historian, and collector, as no other testament has been printed since.

MY DEAR FATHER DOUGHERTY:

IN answer to your note requesting memoranda about my Library I will

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11 John Gilmary Shea to Reverend J. Havens Richards, September 6, 1891, Georgetown University Archives, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC.
State as follows:

The Library has been collected almost exclusively to bring together books relating to the Catholic Church in the United States, and those countries directly connected with it.

Beginning with the discovery of Vinland by the Northmen it has Torfaeaus’ Vinland, in Latin, with the recent English translation, works by DaCosta, Horsford, and other on the Northmen.

The discovery by Columbus is represented by the Regiomontanus Almanac, 1489; Ruchamer, 1508; the Letters of Peter Martyr, the Giusstantini Psalter, containing the first life of Columbus, 1572; Barlow’s fac-simile of First Voyage, privately printed; Scyllacius, Third Voyage, privately printed by James Lenox; Harrisse’s Notes and Work on the Genoa Bank, both privately printed; Lives by Ferdinand Columbus, Roselly de Lorgues, Tarducci; the discussion as to the Coffin discovered at Santo Domingo in a series of pamphlets.

The early voyages and discoveries on our coast by Catholics are shown in Ramusio, 1565; Montanus, Gyrnaeus, Thevet’s Cosmographie, 1585; and France Antarctique, Porcacchi and Ortelisus, Gemma Phrysius, DeLaet; the discussion as to Verazzani by Murphy, Brevoort, DaCosta; Harrisse’s Cabot, etc.

The Spanish Mission-work at the South, in Florida, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona and California is described in Mendoza’s China, 1585, etc.; Montoya’s New Mexico, 1602; Benavides, 1630; Perea, Vetancurt, Torquemada, Davila, Barcia, Menendes, Historia del Colegio Apostolico; all the Lives of Ven. Father Margil, Process of his Canonization; Life of Father Juniper Serra, Maria de Agreda, Mistica Cuidad dal de Dios and Correspondence; Alegre’s History of the Society of Jesus, Tanner’s Societas Militans; Palou’s work, the Tres Cartes on the Dominican Missions, Hernan-Ez, Coleccion de Bulas, Escudero’s Sonora and Chihuahua; Pino’s New Mexico, Azipe’s Texas, De Onis’ Memorial; Coleccion Ecclesiastica Mejicana, several works of Ayeta: the Sermon on the Martyrs of the Colorado. Many of these works are of extreme rarity. There are also Alaman’s History of Mexico, Veytia, works on Central America, Porto Rico, etc.

On Canada, connecting with the early missions in Maine, New York, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, Wisconsin, etc., there are Cartier’s Voyages (Tross’ reprints), Champlain’s Voyages, Paris and Quebec reprints; L’Escarbot, Tross reprint; the Jesuit Relations 14 out of 36 originals, and the Quebec reprint; Ragueneau’s Life of La Mère Cathérine, original; Traites avec les Sauvages, original; several eclects, original; Creuxius, Historia Canadensis, original; Le Clerq’s Gaspesie; Establissement de la Foi, Imperfect; Hennepin’s Various Voyages, Le Houtan, Le Beau, Bossu, etc., Marquette’s Voyages, Rich’s and Lenox’s with a curious Dutch edition; Joutel’s Voyage in French and Spanish; Juchereau, Histoire de l’hotel Dieu, Charlevoix, Vie de la Mère Marie de l’Incarnation, and other lives; Quebec
Rituel; Histories of Canada by Charlevoix, De la Potherie, Ferland, Maillon, Garneau; Sagard’s Grand Voyage, original and reprint; Sagard’s Histoire Du Canada; Lives of Ven. Bishop Laval by La Tour and others; Life of Bp. St. Valier; Historical works of Abbé Cagrain, Memoires des Commissionnaires; works on Nova Scotia; Pastoral Letters of Bishops and Archbishops of Quebec. Early Jesuit Relations printed or reprinted privately by James Lennox and Dr. O’Callaghan; the Cramoisy Series. Works on Louisiana by Le Page du Pratz, Dumont, La Harpe, Laval, the famous memorial original, Champigny, Margry’s Collections; Quebec Documents; Byrmner’s Archive Reports.

For Maryland missions and the development of the Church, Dodd’s History of the Church in England, Flanagan’s Olivers’s Collections, and Biography, the Records of the Society of Jesus by Brother Foley; Brennan’s History of the Church in Ireland; Cogan’s History of the Diocese of Meath; Life of Right Rev. Dr. Doyle; Laws of Maryland; White’s Journal, Relations of Maryland.

Works on the French co-operation in the Revolution are largely represented. Lives of Archbishop Carroll and all other biographies of Catholic Bishops or Priests, or religious in this country published in any language, making more than 150 volumes.

Histories of dioceses, churches, colleges, parishes, that have appeared in this country in English, German, or French. Many works on Religious orders, their rules, ceremonials, etc. Of the Catholic Councils, Synods, Statutes issued in the various dioceses, there are about 100, a collection that cannot be equaled.

A set of the Annales de la Propagation de la Foi, a set of the Quebec Annales, a set of the Berichte der Leopolden Stiftung, with many works on the Indian missions by Father DeSmet and others.

Of the early printed Catholic books in this country, I have 205, the greater part of those described in Finotti’s Bibliographia Catholica Americana, and 38 that were unknown to him, including some of the earliest and rarest. The library contains all the Catholic Bibles, Testaments, etc., printed in this country described in Shea’s Bibliography of Catholic Bibles. The Catholic Newspapers, Magazines and Reviews printed in the United States amount now to 489 volumes, a collection that seems incredible to some who know the difficulty of obtaining them.

The Collection of Catholic pamphlets is very large, probably 3000 in all, and embraces many of a general character, on the School Question, Freedom of Worship, Lectures, Discussions, with Pastoral Letters and others relating to single dioceses in the United States.

For collateral study there are Histories of the United States by Bancroft, McMaster, Spencer, the rare publications of the Bradford Club and Prince Society; the best history of each one of the States, some extremely rare, Horsmanden’s Negro Plot; publications of the New York, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and other Historical Societies; a share in the Publication
Fund of the New York Historical Society and the volumes issued by it; the Historical Magazine of Pennsylvania Historical Society, New England Historical Genealogical Register, etc.

There are also books of Travel touching Catholic matters, Controversies, local histories bearing on Catholic churches, institutions, etc.

The set of Catholic Almanacs is complete, including Field’s, 1817; Power’s, 1822; and the rival editions where two appeared, and the local issued during the Civil War.

There are rare early works not connected with this country, but in place in a Catholic Library, Bible of 1494, Testament of 1506; Mamonrectus or Explanation of Hard Words in the Bible, 1483; a work on the Mass about 1470, with the old form of the Hail Mary written on the last page, and defaced by some Reformer; De Triplice Vita, 1489; Works showing popular religious teaching before the Reformation—De Burgo’s Pupilla Oculi, De Eruditione Christi Fidelium, Manipulus Curatorum, etc., the original edition of Blessed Thomas More’s Utopia; several early printed Catholic works from Continental presses; Pentateuch in Hebrew, Spanish, with prayers, Jewish prayer books, and the two earliest books issued in the Irish character at Rome.

Besides the Bible of 1494, there is the edition of the Bible issued in 1592 by Pope Clement VIII, which was made the standard. This is now extremely rare, and took me years to find; the edition of 1593, and that issued under Pius IX. from the Propaganda Press; the Bible de Vence, Latin and French; Allioli’s Bible, Latin and German; the original Douay and Rheims Bible, 1582, 1609; the second edition by Consturier, Rouen; Witham’s New Testament, 2 vols., with one volume or an edition unknown to Cotton; Nary’s New Testament, excessively rare; Blessed John Moher’s Penitential Psalms; first edition of the Greek Testament in the United States, etc.

The collection of books relating to the Indian tribes with works in Indian languages is very large. Many of these bear on Catholic missions. It embraces a full set, and perhaps, the only full set of the reports of the Indian Department, and many reports, travels, expeditions, tribal histories, and mission accounts now rare. The works in and on Indian languages number 380, and form one of the largest collections of the kind in the United States. This part, if not considered desirable, could be easily disposed of for $1,000.

Bibliography is represented by Sabin’s American Bibliography about half the Numbers; Bibliographies of the Indian languages by Philling, Cotton’s English Bibles and Rheims and Douay, O’Callaghan’s American Bibles, Catalogues of the New York State Library, Wisconsin Historical Society, etc., Corwin’s Squier’s, O’Callaghan’s, Finotti’s, Brinley’s, Barlow’s, Brayton Ives’, and many other large libraries; Bibliographical works on the Jesuits, Franciscans, etc.

There are, besides, general histories of the Church and of the Missions, with many works on Protestant sects useful for references.

Besides many books of miscellaneous character, the library comprises an extensive collection of documents relating to the History of the Catholic Church.
in America, originals or copies made in Rome, France, Spain, England, copies of early parish registers, letters, etc. There is also a large collection of autograph letters, embracing papers and documents signed and issued by many of the Popes, letters of Cardinals, famous men, monarchs, most of the Presidents of the United States, Vice Presidents, Cabinet officers and others, with most of the Catholic Bishops of the United States from the Most Rev. John Carroll to the present time. Many curious relics of early Catholic times will also be found there. I think this synopsis will give you what you desire, and idea of my Library, and I remain, dear Rev. Father, with great respect,

Your Sincere Friend,

JOHN GILMARRY SHEA

To examine Shea’s collection, we need to explicate his letter. Shea’s outpouring as an historian was tremendous. His own attempt at a bibliography of his writings listed one hundred and thirty-seven works, of which seventy-four were “original compositions” and sixty-three were “works which Shea edited.” Peter Guilday cites and essentially reprints Reverend Edward Spillane’s *Bibliography of John Gilmary Shea* (1912), which lists two hundred forty-seven works, “ranging from short historical sketches to works on general and special topics, reprints of historical documents, devotional works, and publications of original sources.” The culmination of Shea’s work, his *History of the Catholic Church in the United States* could not have been completed if he had not

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12 John Gilmary Shea to John J. Dougherty, undated, quoted in Guilday, *John Gilmary Shea*, 131-134. Following this, there is a lengthy quotation of Shea’s from a May 10, 1891 letter to Father Dougherty, in which Shea states what he believes is the scope, scale, and monetary value of his collection: “My books, pamphlets, bound newspapers, and magazines amount in all to about 13,000, so far as I can judge, and could not be obtained in twenty years’ search. It is worth $10,000. I should like to see it go to some Catholic Institution where it would be preserved and increased, but I am loth to see it go West or South” (134-135); John Gilmary Shea to J. J. Dougherty, March 10, 1891, box 50, folder 5, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.


14 Ibid. Spillane’s bibliography occurs in Edward Spillane, S. J., “Bibliography of John Gilmary Shea,” *Historical Records and Studies*, 6, no. 2 (1912): 249-274. Spillane reminds his readers that Shea was “the founder and first editor” of this publication of the United States Catholic Historical Society.
compiled a library “collected almost exclusively to bring together books relating to the Catholic Church in the United States, and those countries directly connected with it.”

Simply stated, this was John Gilmary Shea’s mission. In fact his exhaustive work as bibliographer, as cited in the four volumes of his History, serves as starting points to the initiate Catholic historian. Shea’s history teaches how to research American Catholic history; Shea’s collection is the text of American Catholic history.

As stated, John Gilmary Shea worked with and from his library; it is a mirror of the contexts of his career. The text of Shea’s letter above roughly follows his collection chronologically; however, primary topics do leap out; and these are the subjects that occupied Shea’s own writing. For example, Shea lists what he considers important “early voyages and discoveries by Catholics,” and his catalog in some places lists relative values, at least in terms of the late nineteenth century. The sixteenth century folio volumes (among the comparatively few in Shea’s collection) of Italian geographer Giovanni Battista Ramusio (1485-1557) apparently fetched a costly $21.00 at auction in 1890. But the content concerned Shea: maps and plans relating to the discovery of the New World, including Canada. On the Spanish missions, there are particular rarities still relevant to researchers today, such as Juan González de Mendoza (1545-1618), Dell’historia della China (1586), describing the relation of Antonio de Espejo’s 1583 exploration of New Mexico. Shea noted in his catalog that an earlier (1585) edition

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16 Remember that larger formats cost more.

contained “no New Mexico matter.” He had also collected early modern books by the Franciscan missionary to New Mexico, Alonso de Benavides (fl. 1630), demonstrated by the rare volume: *Memorial que Fray Iuan de Santander de la orden de san Francisco, Comisario General de Indias, presenta a la Magestad Catolica del Rey don Felipe Quarto nuestro Señor* (Madrid, 1630). This significant volume represents a contemporary account of New Mexico during the period of Spanish Colonialism. However, according to Shea’s catalog, he also had the 1631 work: *Tanto que se saco de una carte que . . . Embio a los Religiosos dela Santa Custodea dela Conversion de San Pablo de dicho Reyno, des de Madrid el ano de 1631* (n.d.); and here, Shea mentions provenance. He wrote about this item: “Extremely rare. From the Emperor Maximilian’s Library.” Unfortunately for Georgetown, if this is an accurate citation of what Shea owned, the item it describes has not survived. A clipping Shea saved describing another Benavides volume, *Requeste remonstrative au Roy d'Espagne sur la conversion du Nouveau Mexico* (1631), noted the price of F150; it did not escape Shea that the rarities he had collected for the purpose of his research also held monetary value.

It is useful at this point to provide a general description of John Gilmary Shea’s Library Catalog at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Noah Farnham Morrison (1863?-1950), a book dealer from Elizabeth, New Jersey, donated the collection to the American Antiquarian Society in 1931. Morrison had published a brief biographical account of Shea as well as a somewhat truncated bibliography of Shea’s

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19 Shea, *Library Catalog*, under the letter “B.”
writings in the 1900 Harper edition of *History and General Description of New France*, which was originally translated by Shea in 1866.\(^5\) Throughout the early twentieth century, Morrison had donated various gifts to the American Antiquarian Society.\(^6\) And as a book dealer, Morrison’s offerings for sale to the public at large emulated the strengths of Shea’s own collection.\(^7\) But unlike Shea’s, Morrison’s stock collection was eventually documented in an auction catalogue produced by the Swann Galleries.\(^8\) One can only conjecture how Noah Farnham Morrison obtained Shea’s *Library Catalog*, since no correspondence between them has survived (or has surfaced). Speculation alone produces the following scenario: Shea utilized Morrison’s services as a convenient book dealer, given his location in Shea’s domicile of Elizabeth, New Jersey; and as such, Shea’s family maintained a connection with him. Not all of Shea’s papers came to Georgetown College in 1892; even though his wife and daughters donated a significant collection of manuscripts later in 1893, which Shea likely considered to have been a part

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\(^{22}\) For example the following sales catalogues, archived at Rutgers University Libraries: *Catalog of rare and curious books and pamphlets including Americana, Indians, Masonry and general literature…* Newark, NJ: Noah Farnham Morrison, October 1894; *Catalog of rare and curious books and pamphlets including Americana, Washington, rebellion, Napoleon, biography and general literature…* Newark, NJ: Noah Farnham Morrison, June 1895; *No.42, Books for sale by Noah Farnham Morrison on Indians, Ireland, trials, Washington and other subjects*, Newark, NJ: Noah Farnham Morrison, 1902; and so on from 1894 through 1932, including *No.227, Americana and things Canadian. Elizabeth, NJ: Noah Farnham Morrison*, 1930.

of the collection he had sold to the College. In fact, there is superficial evidence that suggests that at least one of Shea’s daughters—the younger Emma Isabel—was dissatisfied with her later attempts to access her father’s personal papers in Catholic archives afar.²⁴ What papers that may have remained with the Shea women did not come to Georgetown College after 1893. Certainly, his Library Catalog ended in the hands of a local-to-them book dealer, who could gleam from it useful insights into the world of Catholic Americana. And just as certainly, Miss Isabel Shea’s “Life” of her father never saw the light of day. She later entrusted this task to Shea’s apparent heir as United States Catholic historian, Peter Guilday:

Some time ago, through the gracious kindness of his only surviving daughter, Dr. Shea’s personal correspondence and private papers were placed in my care in order to ensure their preservation. I need not say with what reverence I have read these intimate glimpses into his life and labors and especially his sorrows.²⁵

Even though this scenario is plausible based upon extent correspondence, it lacks sufficient archival evidence. As John Gilmary Shea was the quintessential archivist historian—as was the trend during the latter half of the nineteenth century—this author cannot but conjecture, and with great trepidation.

Shea’s Library Catalog consists of thirty-three groupings of what was originally described to this researcher as “scrappy bits of paper,” arranged roughly alphabetically by author. In addition, there are three miscellaneous groupings, three groupings of “Indian

²⁴ University of Notre Dame Archives, “Notre Dame Archives: Calendar,” University of Notre Dame, http://archives.nd.edu/calendar/c189301.htm (accessed November 1, 2010). This “Calendar” references correspondence between Emma Isabel Shea and James F. Edwards, etc. at the University of Notre Dame Archives. Isabel Shea had difficulty in 1893 receiving back some of her father’s correspondence to copy for her records, as she endeavored to write a life of her father.
²⁵ Guilday, preface to John Gilmary Shea, 7.
Books,” one small grouping of “Missing Indian Books,” one grouping titled “Councils, Synods & Statutes,” and one grouping of “Catholic Newspapers and Periodicals.” As Henry Warner Bowden stated, Shea’s catalog contains citations for “approximately 2,763 volumes with some duplicate titles.” And as John Gilmary Shea had stated himself: “I cannot [give] a cash valuation without completing my catalogue, pricing it, and having it priced by an expert.” He did not come close to completing it. Nevertheless, what can we learn from it? This researcher focused on the evidence provided by the catalog itself: items that were priced, items expected to be found, and items that were not found in the catalog at all.

Let us step back and consider the subject areas upon which Shea focused in his letter to Father Dougherty. For example, the New World occupied many years of Shea’s output, and Canada was at the forefront. When he discusses Canada in his letter, he spends much of his time discussing reprints. However, this term held a different connotation for Shea and his time than it does for the twenty-first-century reader. In the nineteenth century, the reprint was a mechanism for informational dissemination. Consider Shea’s own Cramoisy series, published over the course of his career as an historian. As a novice, Shea had been exposed to efforts in translating the Jesuit Relations with his mentor, Father Felix Martin. The archive in Montreal also contained a

26 Shea, Library Catalog. There is no grouping for the letter X; the letters Y Z are grouped together.


28 John Gilmary Shea to Reverend J. Havens Richards, September 6, 1891, Georgetown University Archives, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC.
seventeenth-century series published by Sebastian Cramoisy relating to the missionary
work of Jesuits in the New World. No individual title in Shea’s Cramoisy series had a
tremendous publication; indeed, many were considered rare commodities at the time of
his death. However, the fact that Shea had the series published at all opened up an
archive to researchers that had previously been closed. Among the Canadian New World
rarities in Shea’s collection expected to be listed in his catalog was Gabriel Sagard’s *Le
Grand Voyage du pays des Huron* (1632), represented by a typical clipping:

SAGARD, GABRIEL. *LE GRAND VOYAGE DU PAYS DES
HURONS*. Avec un Dictionnaire de la Langue Huronne.
Small 8vo, calf Paris, 1632
With the Huron Dictionary complete. Of extreme rarity. Always
priced now at over $100.29

The “scrappy bits of paper” that make up the whole of the catalog consist of either
cclipings pasted on approximately five by two inch paper, or handwritten citations—
primarily in Shea’s own hand—of the same approximate size. Gabriel Sagard’s
“original” grand voyage could fetch a hefty price in the latter half of the nineteenth
century; and Shea’s copy also has the signature of E. B. O’Callaghan as an earlier
provenance. But note that Shea gave equal weight in his letter to Father Dougherty to
the reprint edition; he had both copies in his collection, and like the “original,” the reprint
edition also contained a dictionary in the Huron language. The above transcription from
Shea’s catalog also speaks to method: Shea clipped this citation from the auction

29 Shea, *Library Catalog*, under the letter “S.”

30 Shea purchased this volume for a comparatively bargain price. The 1632 “original” edition
appears in the auction sale catalogue for E. B. O’Callaghan’s collection; lot number 2046. Apparently, the
book fetched $57.00 at auction. E. W. Nash, *Catalogue of the Late E. B. O’Callaghan, M.D., LL.D.
Historian of New York* (New York: Bangs and Company, 1882), 185. Price annotations were added to the
copy held by the National Library of Canada.
catalogue for E. B. O’Callaghan’s collection. In fact, most of the citations in his catalog are from sales clippings, many with hand-written annotations by Shea, adjusting the price or the description of a given volume. For instance, Shea would line through printed descriptions of luxurious volumes to add notes like “roan,” “paper,” “cloth,” or “boards.” He would also line through words like “clean copy.” He had a limited budget, and the added luxuries of morocco bindings and pristine copies were not always within it; nor did he require such luxuries for his utilitarian purposes.31

Shea collected histories, and it is useful to consider how historians wrote history during Shea’s years as an initiate historian: the middle of the nineteenth century. George Bancroft, of the “middle group of American historians,”32 published when Shea was young and learning how to consider history. Bancroft’s American histories were deeply influential to generations of historians; however, Shea belonged to the latter nineteenth century “archival” group. He may have admired Bancroft’s writing, but he did not emulate his method.33 Nevertheless, he collected Bancroft. Surviving in the Shea collection are Bancroft’s *History of the United States of America, from the Discovery of the Continent* (Boston, 1861) and the more ephemeral *Oliver Hazard Perry and the Battle of Lake Erie* (1860). But the following did not survive:

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31 However, there was one book Shea would have liked to have been luxuriously bound. In a letter to E. B. O’Callaghan, Shea states: “The Bible that I will get sometime will be maroon morocco, blind tooling, gilt brass rim and clasp. You may not like the last two ponderous additions.” John Gilmary Shea to E. B. O’Callaghan, December 29, 1858, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol. 15, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC.


33 Ibid., 238-242.
*Autograph presentation copy.* New York, 1854

During this time period, Shea resided in New York and was in a position to attend this event; in fact, he had attended similar events, as evidenced in his correspondence.

Of the two works authored by Shea deemed to be his best, the first was one of his earliest: *History of the Catholic Missions among the Indian Tribes of the United States* (1855). This time in American history, Shea’s archival approach was “fresh and commanding.” The work earned contemporary praise; for example, the *New York Times* stated: “We are much pleased with the style of this production, and from what we have read of it, anticipate much pleasure in the time we shall give it.” And the *New York Evangelist* stated:

> A history of the Catholic missions among the Indian tribes of this country, by a Catholic—John Gilmary Shea—is a novelty not without value and interest. One of the most romantic chapters in all the annals of Catholic missions, is the labor of Jesuit missionaries among the North American Indians. They involved an amount of self-denial, heroism and sagacious planning, which cannot be studied without wonder, if without admiration. In the hands of Mr. Shea, the full measure of this heroism is dealt out, as was to be expected. The work presents this history as it is understood at Rome, and undoubtedly embodies all the facts. It is well worth study on all accounts; as proof

34 Shea, *Library Catalog*, under the letter “B.”

35 John Gilmary Shea to Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan, January 11, 1847, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol. 1, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Shea mentions encountering O’Callaghan at the New York Historical Society in regards to his interest in the Jesuit Relations. Peter Guilday also mentions this in *John Gilmary Shea*, 20: “Dr. O’Callaghan was one of the first to recognize the historical value of the *Jesuit Relations*, and in 1846 read a paper before the New York Historical Society on the subject.”


of one of the most gigantic schemes of conquest ever undertaken, and as indication of what men will dare and suffer for the accomplishment of a darling purpose.\(^{38}\)

The work saw several editions prior to the outbreak of the Civil War.\(^{39}\) But Shea’s method is worth noting in this chapter on his collection: “The volume was the result of ten years in collecting materials . . . the sources he used made up a creditable library of early Americana.”\(^{40}\) Remember that Shea wrote in his letter to Father Dougherty that the works on Indian tribes was “very large,” and many dealt with “Catholic missions”; he thought that this section could be removed and sold separately, \(^{41}\) and his catalog clearly demonstrates this, with its three separate groupings of “Indian Books” and small grouping of “Missing Indian Books.” Among the missing, incidentally, was the rare Cramoisy publication on François Du Creux’s 1664 Relation published by Sebastian Cramoisy. From the clipping in Shea’s catalog, much can be gleaned:

\begin{quote}
CREVXIUS, P. FRANCIS. HISTORIAE CANADENSIS SIVE NOVAE FRANCLAE LIBRI DECEM. AD ANNUM VSQUE CHRISTI MDCLVI. Map and 13 plates. 4to, vellum
Paris: Cramoisy, 1664

Rare perfect copy. Priced by Dufossé Paris, this year, at 300 fr., … [torn slip] Brinley’s brought $80.\(^{42}\)
\end{quote}


\(^{40}\) Ibid., 25.

\(^{41}\) John Gilmary Shea to John J. Dougherty, undated, quoted in Guilday, \textit{John Gilmary Shea}, 133.

\(^{42}\) Shea, \textit{Library Catalog}, under “Missing Indian Books.”
For one, the clipping speaks to the relative value of the item, comparing French francs to U.S. dollars. In actuality, the clipping is from the 1882 auction catalogue for E. B. O’Callaghan’s collection; the section torn compares F300 with $60; and George Brinley—a noted nineteenth-century collector of Americana—had a copy that fetched $80 at auction prior to the O’Callaghan sale. In fact, O’Callaghan’s copy only sold for $42.00, according the auction record. And, based on the description of O’Callaghan’s copy, it does not match the copy owned by Shea, which was not bound in vellum, but in calf. They shared interests for certain; but they did not share this particular volume. Thankfully, Shea’s copy was not altogether missing; it has been cataloged with the Shea collection and still survives today. Although, Shea separated out his “Indian Books,” he did include a number of them in the alphabetical arrangement of his catalog, a further indication that he did not have the time to complete his catalog. That he felt certain, as indicated in his letter to Father Dougherty, that he could sell this part of his collection for $1,000 is interesting; the estimate could have been based on a rough accounting of what he actually paid for the items, although some of the “Indian Books” that came to Georgetown are unique and difficult to price today. Shea could also have been offered this amount by a book dealer for the “Indian Books”; for example, Elizabeth, New Jersey book dealer Noah Farnham Morrison sold “Indian Books,” among other Americana. However, this can only be conjecture. What remains clear is that Shea segregated this

43 Nash, Catalogue of the Late E. B. O’Callaghan, 58; George Brinley, Catalogue of the American Library of the Late Mr. George Brinley (Hartford, CT: Case Lockwood and Brainard Company, 1878), 1: 11.

44 For example, a circa 1700 manuscript catechism in the Mohawk language has an appraised value of $60,000 today.
type of book in his catalog, just in case this type did not convey the broader appeal of his other offerings.

What were the other rarities in Shea’s mind? Here is the evidence from his catalog: labels written purposely in a careful hand, probably for display:

- Micmac Hieroglyphic
- Prayers written by an Indian Girl

There is a handwritten note retained in the *John Gilmary Shea Papers* regarding a manuscript vesper book in the Micmac language containing the Our Father “copied by an Indian girl.”

A sixteenth century imprint with a highly decorated title page is represented in another display label:

- Manipulus Curatorum
- Printed 1530

The labels retained in his catalog demonstrate particular rarities, including “the Regiomontanus Almanac, 1489” Shea mentions in his letter to Father Dougherty. Another label underlines this point:

- Marsilius Ficinus
- De Tripli Vita
- Printed in Paris in 1489
- 400 years old.

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45 Shea, *Library Catalog*, under “[Miscellaneous Grouping I].”

46 John Gilmary Shea Papers, box 9, folder 9, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC.

47 Shea, *Library Catalog*, under “[Miscellaneous Grouping I].”

48 Ibid.
Shea describes this item in his letter when mentioning works not strictly related to the “New World,” but nonetheless, still important for a “Catholic Library.” Another such work is one of the few remaining complete first editions of Saint Thomas More’s *Utopia*. Although no display label survives in Shea’s catalog, the book itself reveals evidence of having been opened at its fictitious map page for a long period of time.⁴⁹ Incidentally, no slip exists for *Utopia* in Shea’s catalog, even though the provenance is certain. This is a treasure he mentions in his letter with bibliographic knowledge; calling it “the original edition.” One can but imagine why it does not occur in his catalog, even in its obvious incomplete state.⁵⁰ On Bibles, Shea wrote to Dougherty: “Besides the Bible of 1494, there is the edition of the Bible issued in 1592 by Pope Clement VIII, which was made the standard. This is now extremely rare, and took me years to find.”⁵¹ Apparently only five hundred copies of this first edition of the “Clementine Bible” were issued.⁵² If nothing else, the evidence of the display labels and the language used in his letter to Father Dougherty prove that Shea was proud of the rarities in his collection; but for Shea, whose books hardly ever bore any outward signs of beauty, the content of the works spoke the loudest; and especially for his Catholic Americana. “Of the early printed

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⁴⁹ The severe discoloration of the map page demonstrates the cumulative effect of light damage over time. All other pages are in excellent condition.

⁵⁰ Another rarity expected to be represented in the catalogue was Father Gaspar Catner’s *Relatio Sepulturae Magno Orientis Apostolo S. Francisco Xaverio Erectae in Insula Saciano anno Saeculari MDCC* [Peking? 1700]. John Gilmary Shea owned two copies of this xylographic book on the original burial place of Saint Francis Xavier. The second copy is now in the holdings of the Woodstock Theological Society Library, Rare Books Collections.


Catholic books in this country, I have 205, the greater part of those described in Finotti’s Bibliographia Catholica Americana, and 38 that were unknown to him, including some of the earliest and rarest.”

There are noted inconsistencies as to the actual size of John Gilmary Shea’s library; however, there are no such discrepancies as to its scope. Of the possible 10,000 items in Shea’s library, approximately 2,700 are represented in his admittedly incomplete *Library Catalog*. And approximately 3,600 volumes have been reassembled in Georgetown University Library’s Rare Books Collections. Not counted in this figure are the over four hundred volumes of periodicals still not completely cataloged; as well as the numerous manuscript items retained in the *John Gilmary Shea Papers*. As to subject matter, religion—and especially Catholicism—eclipse almost all else, with forty-five percent of the surviving collection falling into that classification. North American history lags as a slightly distant second at thirty-five percent. Proud of his bibliographic endeavors, much can be gleaned from Shea’s simple statement regarding the Catholic periodicals he amassed; he wished all to share in his own belief in their value: “The Catholic Newspapers, Magazines and Reviews printed in the United States amount now

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53 Ibid., 132.

54 The majority of the printed material in Shea’s library would not have been considered rare in 1892; these populated the then newly constructed Riggs Library and circulated to researchers. In the natural course of library collections: books are lost, or damaged beyond repair; in addition, libraries weed. And consequently, the entirety of Shea’s library has not survived.

55 Bound manuscripts have been processed in the John Gilmary Shea Papers, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC. These items have—historically to Georgetown—not been treated as books. One such item has been mentioned in this chapter: the Micmac manuscript vesper book written by an “Indian Girl.” Another of the numerous manuscript rarities would include a circa 1700 Mohawk catechism, possibly bound in deerskin.
to 489 volumes, a collection that seems incredible to some who know the difficulty of obtaining them.”\textsuperscript{56} In 1891, he wrote in the \textit{Catholic News}: “We have never seen a perfect set of the older Catholic newspapers.”\textsuperscript{57} But Shea tried his best to assemble one. Ironically, his collection has not been documented as carefully as it would have been had it been auctioned, like Father Finotti’s collection and E. B. O’Callaghan’s. Shea’s collection has continued to be used by students and other researchers at Georgetown University for almost one hundred and twenty years. And this is also what he wished. John Gilmary Shea’s library collection was his personal research archive; it is in itself an historical evidence of the contexts in which he operated. And what survives of that collection provides archival contexts for researchers present and to come.

\textsuperscript{56} John Gilmary Shea to John J. Dougherty, undated, quoted in Guilday, \textit{John Gilmary Shea}, 132.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 31.
CHAPTER FOUR

JOHN GILMARY SHEA AS COMPARED TO COLLECTORS OF HIS CONTEXT

My real vocation is old bookselling.

—Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan

Many points of intersection could begin this tale. But Shea’s is a nineteenth-century story, and even the Catholic nineteenth century had its Gothic legends. One of the most sensational was the international bestseller: Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures* (1836).¹ Maria Monk’s story, printed and reprinted, rode not only on the wave of Gothic sensation; it enervated the nativist feeling rampant in antebellum America. And as an example of anti-Catholicism, several printings of this tale are documented in the collections of three great nineteenth-century bibliographers of Catholic Americana: Father Joseph Finotti; Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan; and John Gilmary Shea. For example, their respective libraries held the following titles:

775 *MARIA MONK*. Awful Exposure of the Atrocious Plot. N.Y. 1836.

776 *MARIA MONK*. Further Disclosures concerning the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal. N.Y. 1855.

777 *MARIA MONK*. Awful Disclosures. Revised, with an Appendix. N.Y. 1837.

1468 *MARIA MONK*. Further Disclosures By. N.Y. 1837.

2205 *STONE, W. L*. Maria Monk and the Nunnery of the Hotel Dieu. N.Y. 1836.²

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¹ Susan M. Griffin, “Awful Disclosures: Women’s Evidence in the Escaped Nun’s Tale,” *PMLA* 111 (January 1996): 93. According to Griffin, “20,000 copies sold within a few weeks, 300,000 by 1860.”

Among the Maria Monk titles in John Gilmary Shea’s catalogue are: *Awful Exposure of the Atrocious Plot by Certain Individuals against the Clergy and Nuns of Lower Canada through the Intervention of Maria Monk* (New York, 1836); *More Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (New York, 1836); *Further Disclosures by Maria Monk* (New York, 1837); *Exposure of Maria Monk’s Pretended Abduction* (Philadelphia, 1837); J. J. Slocum, *Confirmation of Maria Monk’s Disclosures* (London, 1837). 3 Prompted undoubtedly by the public sensation of Rebecca Reed’s story (1835), which helped to fuel anti-Catholic riots in Charlestown, Massachusetts the year before Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures*, even a respected publisher, as Shea will tell, could not see beyond the dollar signs. 4

Ever the bibliographer John Gilmary Shea could not help but highlight the minutia of publication details:

The pecuniary success of Miss Reed’s ‘Six Months in a Convent,’ seems to have stimulated persons to undertake a work of courser and viler material, that would command even greater circulation. A wretched girl named Maria Monk, who, after leading a life of shame, had been placed by her mother in a Magdalen Asylum at Montreal, from which she was dismissed or escaped by the aid of one of her old lovers, was the tool employed. The unscrupulous plotters made her pretend that she had not been a penitent at Magdalen Asylum, but a nun in the Hôtel Dieu, and a narrative was drawn up in her name charging the devoted nuns, one of them a daughter of General Ethan Allen, with immorality, harshness, cruelty, and murder. After stereotyping the infamous book, the conspirators offered it to Harper Brothers, well-known publishers

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4 Griffen, “Awful Disclosures,” 93: “Rebecca Theresa Reed’s *Six Months in a Convent* (1835) sold 10,000 copies in the first week and an estimated 200,000 within a month.”
in New York. That house, lured by prospective profits, undertook to issue it, but, ashamed of such a vile work, published it under the name of Howe & Bates, two persons in their employ.5

Again, note the bibliographic details interlaced with Monk’s scandalous story. Shea mentions first of all the stereotyping of the tale. This is a printer’s term, defined by the OED as “the method or process of printing in which a solid plate of type-metal, cast from a papier-mâché or plaster mould taken from the surface of a forme of type, is used for printing from instead of the forme itself.”6 And who would know this trade better than John Gilmary Shea, who invested in a stereotyping and electrotyping enterprise in 1858 in order to make ends meet?7 In other words, Shea emphasized the fact that the publishers intended for this story to be printed and reprinted ad nauseum; and it was. Irrefutably, Harper Brothers meant to profit by this tale, regardless of whether they were willing to put their good name behind it. In fact, they were not willing, as Shea documented and as the 1836 legal proceedings against Maria Monk disclosed.8 The role

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7 John Gilmary Shea to E. B. O’Callaghan, June 30, 1858, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol. 14, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Shea writes to O’Callaghan on an advertisement for his new venture, Rennie, Shea, and Lindsay, Stereotypers and Electrotypers: “Voice what I have come to! After hesitating whether to buy out an old [publishing] concern in Philadelphia, going into a good publishing house in Baltimore or starting for myself in New York, I saw the advertisement of the sale of Valentine’s foundry, made my agreement with Mr. Rennie the foreman who has been in the concern for twenty years, and have bought it at auction for less than half its value. . . . I think that it will be very profitable for me. All that I have invested is some $2500 or rather one half of it for I sold my partners one half of the concern and hold their mortgage on the stock for it.”

8 Ray Allen Billington, “Maria Monk and Her Influence,” The Catholic Historical Review 22 (October 1936): 287: “The manuscript of the book was offered first to Harper Brothers. This publishing house, although tempted by the prospect of large profits, was unwilling to risk its reputation by printing so
of the bibliographer is to be exhaustive and inclusive. What captured the minds of
Finotti, O’Callaghan, and Shea was the accurate representation of Catholicism in the new
world; that is, the whole story. And as anti-Catholicism was a part of that story, their
collections could not be complete without telling the tales in all their sordid, Gothic
details.

Catholic Americana collections such as John Gilmary Shea’s would be virtually
impossible to compile today on Shea’s meager budget, especially with its particular
strengths in Native American materials. However, there were two collections
comparable to Shea’s in his lifetime: the collections assembled by Joseph M. Finotti and
Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan. Shea himself had a hand in compiling their collections for
auction. On these collections, Shea wrote:

[Finotti’s] library as a collection is a peculiar one. The part bearing on the
Church of which he was a zealous clergyman, especially the works printed
in the last and early in the present century, as well as his collection of newspa-
per and periodicals, it would be almost impossible to get together again,
certainly not without great patience, time, and expense; yet to form any
adequate idea of the progress of that element in this country, many are
invaluable. Up to this time, however, such books have been so generally
disregarded that few can be found in any of our public libraries or even the
collections of scholars, and opportunities like the present will rarely occur.9

Although Finotti’s collection more closely mirrored Shea’s own collecting focus,
O’Callaghan’s Americana collections could not be “exceeded by that of any living

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scholar," according to Shea. And further: "The Library is the result of more than forty years’ sole devotion to New York history. It is probably the best working Library of Americana in general, and New York Americana in particular, ever offered at public sale in this city."

The December 4, 1882 auction by Bangs and Company realized $12,098. But these collections were "scattered to the winds;" no institution gathered these life-long collections into their own. In an 1887 essay lamenting this fact, the Catholic historian Father Andrew Arnold Lambing wrote:

How many rare articles of historical value are scattered here and there throughout the country where no care is being taken of them. . . . [B]ut the public, and most of all, the student of our early history, cannot have access to them, or if he can, it will be at great expense, inconvenience and loss of time, so widely are they scattered. . . . Numerous private collections have been made; but the disadvantage of such is readily seen. Few persons have the leisure necessary, few have the means, few the taste, and fewer still a proper place to arrange a collection. And although they are a treasure in the hands of their possessor, the public derives little benefit from it. They are a treasure, but a treasure locked up from public inspection; for few persons would feel that freedom in a private residence that they would in a public institution. And what is usually the fate of such collections? Let the shades of Dr. O’Callaghan and Father Finotti answer. The fruit of years of patient toil knocked to the four winds by the hammer of the auctioneer, to be gathered into other private institutions to suffer the same fate.

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10 Nash, *Catalogue of the Library of the Late E. B. O’Callaghan*, [ii].

11 Ibid.


13 A. A. Lambing, “A Rare Historical Collection,” *The American Catholic Historical Researches* 3 (April 1887): 50.
Of the great Catholic collections of the time, J. M. Finotti’s and E. B. O’Callaghan’s paired naturally in Lambing’s mind; their rich collections could have formed the nucleolus of a “National Catholic Library,” called for anonymously (by writer “S”) the year before in *The American Catholic Quarterly Review*. How did these collectors and their collections connect with John Gilmary Shea? The answer lies in their research.

In 1846, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan read a paper on the historical value of the *Jesuit Relations* to the New York Historical Society. The published Relations—which were letters by Jesuit missionaries in America back to Europe—held exceptional value as documentary evidence of early America; and not only did O’Callaghan rediscover them, he created a catalogue raisonné of them as well as a table of current (to 1847) locations in Canada and the United States:

Though considerable efforts have been made, to secure a complete series of these books, they have as yet been unattended with success, and perhaps no volumes are more scattered through divers libraries than these Relations. This circumstance has rendered it more difficult for the student to consult them. In the hope of determining what volumes are accessible, and where they are, I have entered into and extensive correspondence, the result of which is to be found in the following [table].

O’Callaghan’s lecture encouraged the first correspondence between the two; and once established, their correspondence continued for more than thirty years. But more than

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14 S, “A National Catholic Library,” *The American Catholic Quarterly* 11 (January 1886): 115-122. Writer “S” was certainly John Gilmary Shea, although this essay does not appear in Father Edward Spillane’s bibliography of Shea’s writings, effectively reprinted in Peter Guilday’s biography. Shea is credited with the essay much later, in brief remarks relating to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* as a surrogate “clearinghouse” of answers to the multitude of Catholic historical questions Shea could have imagined. “Notes and Comment,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 4 (October 1918): 384.


friendship, O’Callaghan’s interest in Jesuit missions and publications inspired Shea’s own work as a Catholic historian. Letters and books flowed between them, and their Catholic research always seemed in tandem. But who was Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan, and why was he interested in documenting Catholic history in the New World? The first person to answer these questions was John Gilmary Shea, in his obituary to O’Callaghan: “The Historical study of our country has recently lost a patient careful, judicious investigator, the fruit of whose labors has long been the resource and safe guide of many seeking to familiarize themselves with our country’s early days.” Shea’s narrative follows O’Callaghan’s early romantic life, likely told to Shea by the man himself.

O’Callaghan was born in Ireland in 1797, the youngest child in a large family; nevertheless, he benefited from an education, graduating from an Irish college and then studying medicine in Paris. By 1823, he had immigrated to Canada and began practicing medicine by 1827. However, he was soon drawn into the Upper Canadian politics of rebellion, first becoming editor of the *Vindicator* in 1834, elected in 1835 to the provincial Parliament for Yamaska in Upper Canada, and even participating in

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military action at St. Denis in 1837. Marked from that point as a traitor, O’Callaghan fled to New York, where he made his living again by practicing medicine. But unable to rid himself of the habit of trying to vindicate troubles, he became interested in New York’s Anti-Rent War. He found documentation in Dutch relating to claims of the Dutch settlers in New York; to do this, he had to acquire knowledge of Dutch. Thus O’Callaghan discovered a world of information relating to New York unknown to the general public of the time: “Astonished by the vast amount of historical information which had been secluded from English readers by the language in which it was written, Dr. O’Callaghan began a systematic history of the colony (from original sources), and produced his ‘History of New Netherlands,’ in two octavo volumes. It came to the public and to students as a revelation. It opened a new world.”

James J. Walsh wrote a lengthy, biographical article on O’Callaghan in 1905, twenty-five years after O’Callaghan’s death. Walsh had the benefit of meeting some of O’Callaghan’s contemporaries, although his closest friends had passed away. It seemed strange to Walsh that no historian or biographer had taken up their pen to document O’Callaghan’s contributions to American history, no matter that those contributions could speak for themselves. In addition to Walsh’s encomium, there is: a 1935 Catholic University Ph.D. dissertation by Reverend Francis Shaw Guy, *Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan: A Study in American Historiography (1797-1880)* and a 1986 Concordia University Ph.D. dissertation by Robert Charles Daley, *Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan:*

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22 Ibid., 78.
Irish Patriote. Probably the most complete biography on O’Callaghan to date is Jack Verney’s O’Callaghan: The Making and Unmaking of a Rebel (1994). Verney undertook this task primarily to right the perceived flaw in Guy’s 1935 effort: that the author did not fully consider the history in which O’Callaghan lived, especially during his time in Canada; nor did his paper live up to its title as an historiography.23 On living history, one can be certain that O’Callaghan prided himself as a participant as much as a documenter, just as he proudly wore the gray “Canadian homespun.”24 According to Walsh, “New York friends who remember him well are not of the impression that he felt ashamed of any part that he took in the [Canadian insurrection]; but, on the contrary, recall that he seemed to rejoice over the fact that he once helped to make history, not merely to write it.”25 These were the friends of O’Callaghan’s later years as a man of letters. Jack Verney divides O’Callaghan’s life into three parts: his early years in Ireland and France; his years as an Irish patriot in Canada, and his remaining forty-three years spent in New York “documenting American colonial history.”26 And it is during this later time that O’Callaghan knew and mentored John Gilmary Shea. The state of New York hired O’Callaghan to be their archivist in 1848, paying him an annual salary of $1,500.27 But the history of New York was not O’Callaghan’s sole interest as an historian. Devoutly


26 Verney, O’Callaghan, [1].

Catholic, O’Callaghan’s historical research and collecting interests always seemed to synthesize with his faith.

As stated above, Shea wrote another brief biography for a bibliophile friend, Father Joseph Maria Finotti, which served as the introduction to the auction catalogue for Finotti’s library. Father Finotti, born in Italy in 1817, entered the Jesuit Order at the age of fifteen. Interested in the United States from a young age, Finotti came to the United States from Rome with Father James Ryder (Georgetown College’s twentieth president) in 1845.28 From that point until his ordination, Finotti worked for the Maryland Province, specifically with Georgetown College’s librarian Father James Ward. At Georgetown, Finotti may have developed his taste for bibliography, as his task was to inventory the library’s holdings at the time, some 13,437 volumes.29 After a few brief stints of pastoral work, Finotti left the Jesuits in 1852 and moved to Massachusetts, where he worked as a parish priest and as assistant literary editor for the Boston Pilot. He remained in Massachusetts for many years, but finally moved west in 1876 for his health. He settled ultimately in Denver, Colorado, until an unfortunate accident in 1878 from which he never recovered. Father Finotti died on January 11, 1879.30

From their surviving correspondence, it is difficult to say when John Gilmary Shea and Father Finotti first encountered each other. There are no surviving letters from

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Shea to Finotti in Finotti’s papers; the first letter to Shea from Finotti in Shea’s papers is dated May 21, 1872. This letter pertains primarily to Finotti’s *Bibliographia Catholica Americana* (1872); however, it also implies that Finotti intended to sell his library in that year and not at his death:

> I have sent a very large portion of my library to Bangs Merwin & Co for sale. There are many rare and valuable works. My collection of American Catholic authors, and of records of American Catholic history I have preserved. It is invaluable. I hope next year I’ll be able to publish the Catalogue. I fear the Auctioneers will choke the Catalogue & *slaughter* the books. I wish, if you had a moment of leisure, you would go & take a peep at it, & say a good word as to the value of the books, & the necessity of a good advertising, & a good catalogue.  

For whatever the reason, this sale did not occur in 1872. Father Finotti’s library collection presents as a working library for a Catholic historian and bibliographer. The vast majority of the books were published in the nineteenth century, and many in Finotti’s lifetime, that is, subsequent to 1820. But the vast majority of the books were on subject to his bibliographical work, and Shea’s catalogue annotations often cross-referenced the bibliography: “See Finotti’s Bibliotheca.” In fact, Finotti planned to publish “Part II” of his bibliography to cover the years 1821 to 1875, and his library documented his efforts with the material he had gathered for that purpose. Finotti also collected Americana in general, especially regarding the founding era, with works on

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31 Joseph M. Finotti to John Gilmary Shea, May 21, 1872, box 3, folder 9, John Gilmary Shea Papers, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC.

32 For the record, Finotti was born in either 1817 or 1818. However, his bibliography documented works by Catholic authors that were published in the United States prior to 1820. Incidentally, many of the books in his collection could have come across his desk in his capacity as literary and book editor for the *Boston Pilot*, a Catholic newspaper.

Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, etc. In addition, he had a large collection of
ewspapers, especially Catholic newspapers; and one conjectures whether these were
purchased by John Gilmary Shea himself, to augment his own collection. For certain,
Shea obtained the first Catholic almanac (1817) printed in the United States from
Finotti’s collection; however, it does not appear in the auction catalogue. The earliest
there is lot number 699, “Laity’s Directory to the Church Service for 1822.”34 Shea’s
annotation for this lot described the book as “very rare and important”; apparently, a
buyer paid one dollar for it.35

Overseeing the sale of Finotti’s library was not Shea’ only task after Finotti’s
death; Shea was left with Finotti’s papers. Isabel Shea donated these papers to
Georgetown College in 1893; in a letter to Father J. Havens Richards, she states:

Will you kindly let me know your answer to my questions regarding
the private papers, diaries, manuscripts, correspondence, etc. of the late
Rev. Joseph M. Finotti, at one time a member of the Society. I wrote to

According to Peter Guilday in *John Gilmary Shea*, “The Catholic Directory has broken more than one
editor’s spirit in the long years of its existence. Issued first in 1817 by Matthew Field, in New York, the
*Catholic Laity’s Directory to the Church Service* was a failure and was not continued, although it had been
announced as an annual publication. The failure was not due to the lack of financial support, but to the lack
of interest taken by the clergy who neglected to send information concerning their labors. Five years later
(1822), another attempt was made, the *Laity’s Directory to the Church Service*, published by William H.
Creagh. This failed for the same reason. A third venture was the *United States Catholic Almanac or
Laity’s Directory*, begun in 1832 by James Myers, of Baltimore. From 1833 to 1837, annual *Directories*
were issued by Myers, and from 1838 to 1854 by Fielding Lucas, Jr., of the same city. The 1858 edition
was published by Dunigan & Kirker, with Dr. Shea as general editor.” (59)

35 Ibid. As stated previously, the copy of the Finotti auction catalogue in the Rare Books
Collections, Georgetown University Library, is annotated with sale prices. Shea’s copy of the first *Laity’s
Directory* (1817) has both his bookplate and that of Finotti on the upper cover pastedown. But Shea also
had the 1822 in his collection, as demonstrated by his *Library Catalog*, under the letter “P.” As the
clipping that described this edition in Shea’s “catalog” came from the O’Callaghan sale, it is possible that
Shea’s copy was originally owned by O’Callaghan.
you several weeks ago but received no reply, and as the papers will be ready next week for shipment I am making a last appeal to you.36

Isabel Shea’s correspondence to Richards often feels impatient and almost impetuous. Ultimately, Finotti’s papers came to Georgetown, and Isabel Shea’s mother also donated Shea’s own private papers, to ensure their preservation but also to relieve the family of visitors seeking access to them. But it is in O’Callaghan’s correspondence to Shea that the minds of the book collectors emerge. For example, Bibles and Catholic almanacs populated the letters between Shea and O’Callaghan for many years. And it was on the subject of Bibles that the first piece of correspondence to O’Callaghan by Finotti appeared. On his own Bible collection, Finotti wrote in 1860: “I send you the titles of the only American Bibles I have in my Library. I had more, but I have destroyed them and placed them in Lusher’s charge. Miss Charlotte will tell you where Lusher’s charge is.”37

In addition to Bibles published in America, O’Callaghan had been seeking a complete collection of Catholic almanacs published in the United States; ironically, it was Father Finotti who obtained the first and rarest of these, as mentioned above. In fact, Finotti had a complete set (through 1878) at the time of his death.38 O’Callaghan never obtained a copy of the first almanac, as documented in the auction catalogue for his library. Lot

36 Isabel Shea to J. Havens Richards, June 3, 1893, box 24, folder 4, John Gilmary Shea Papers, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC.

37 J. M. Finotti to E. B. O’Callaghan, August 30, 1860, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol. 17, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC. “Miss Charlotte” refers to O’Callaghan’s wife. This letter implies a prior acquaintance; there is only one letter prior to this from June of 1860. As that letter refers to notices of O’Callaghan’s works appearing in the Boston Pilot, it is possible that their correspondence began in the context as editor to author. However, as O’Callaghan tirelessly wrote to and sought out bibliographers and librarians of Catholic collections, it is impossible to say for certain how their correspondence began.

1875 from his collection (Power, John, The Laity’s Directory, 1822), though according to
the catalogue entry “very rare and important,” sold for $1.25. It likely cost O’Callaghan
one fifth that price or less. When O’Callaghan wrote to Lucas Brothers in Baltimore in
1854 seeking almanacs for the years 1833, 1835, 1837, and 1838, the firm was only able
to procure 1835 and 1837: “As regard the value of them, they cost us 25 cents each which
you may send us together with the postage paid by mail—but we would rather purchase,
than sell at that price, however we cheerfully assist any person like yourself in the
collection of a set, as far as lies in our power.”39 By this time, Shea was in the collecting
game for almanacs himself as well as being involved in the publishing of them. He wrote
to O’Callaghan in 1855: “Remember the Catholic Almanacs which I need 1833, 4, 39 to
44”; and later: “I have recently made a haul of Almanacs some however duplicates. I
have now 1835, 1837 to 1839 inc, 1844 to 1855 inc, and duplicates of 1837, 1845, 1846.
You told me that you had one, what is it, not one of these last I hope, but one of the
desired.”40 Eventually, O’Callaghan procured almost a complete set for the years 1833-
1880; he never obtained the 1838 almanac that Shea was able to find in 1855. And
though these almanacs were described in the sale as having “high value as showing the
progress of the Catholic Church,” they sold as a lot for only thirty-five cents.41

39 Lucas Bros., [Balt.] to E. B. O’Callaghan, March, 1854, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers,
vol. 8, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

40 John Gilmary Shea to E. B. O’Callaghan, March 12, 1855; J. G. Shea to E. B. O’Callaghan, July

41 Nash, Catalogue of the Library of the Late E. B. O’Callaghan, 4. Due to the Civil War, The
United States Catholic Almanac; or Laity’s Directory was not issued in 1862 or 1863. This sale price is
important, as the O’Callaghan sale as a whole set the precedent for the pricing of similar items.
John Gilmary Shea collected Bibles throughout his lifetime. He mentioned in his 1891 letter to Father John Dougherty: “there is the edition of the Bible issued in 1592 by Pope Clement VIII. which was made the standard. This is now extremely rare, and took me years to find….”

Isabel Shea poignantly remembers this quest in a transcript given to Peter Guilday:

Father’s maternal Grandmother was a most remarkable woman of that stern Puritan character, a devoted friend of Father Kohlman, Father Fenwick, and Cardinal Cheverus first Bishop of Boston, she prized an Ecce Homo said to be by Albrecht Dürer, signed by him, given her by Cardinal Cheverus (now at Georgetown College). His Grandmother was a great lover of books and especially of the Bible, her copy was of the first printed by Carey, Philadelphia, 1790. She taught father to hone devotion to the scriptures, a copy of the Bible was always on his desk, he always said were he imprisoned for life, he would take his books with him, and one would be the Bible. No correspondence be brighter or of more interest than that which extended over many years between Dr. Shea and that great English Biblical scholar the late Canon Cotton, they sent their rare editions of the Bible to and fro across the Atlantic for each others pleasure and thoroughly appreciated the warm friendship although not of the same faith, they met on common ground in their love of the Bible. In 1859 Dr. Shea published privately a Bibliographical Account of Bibles and Testaments printed in the United States. Observing the wretched condition of the text of the Catholic Bibles scarcely two of which read alike, he collected all the leading translations and every edition printed in this country and then with the concurrence of Archbishop Kenrick made out a list of errata and induced many publishers to correct the plates they had. In 1871 with the sanction of Cardinal McComb he reprinted for a firm in New York, the original edition of Challoner’s Bible of 1740, comparing the text and conforming in punctuation and orthography of proper names with the standard edition of the Vulgate of 1592. Dr. Shea’s large library was collected for real use, he was fond of calling his books ‘his tomes,’ the department devoted to Bibles and Biblical works, contained many rare and early editions. He waited twenty years, having his order placed with booksellers in every country abroad and

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home before he obtained a copy he wished of the Vulgate of 1592, it arrived only a month or two before he died.43

Isabel Shea reveals much about her father in this testament. And Peter Guilday, in his biography of Shea, utilizes “a curious incident” to demonstrate how in tune were the research and “tastes” of Shea and O’Callaghan.44 Correspondence from Shea to O’Callaghan indicates that the two men had been discussing editions of the Bible since 1855. These discussions also involved the noted bibliophile, James Lenox, who had been enthusiastically collecting Bibles and Testaments for many years.45 Lenox and O’Callaghan began corresponding earlier in the 1850s, when O’Callaghan became archivist for the state of New York; their mutual interest in Jesuit Relations and especially Bibles inspired copious correspondence, and O’Callaghan inscribed his *List of Editions* (1861) to Lenox.46 The Shea-O’Callaghan correspondence below shows how the “curious incident” to which Guilday alludes unfolded; it also serves to demonstrate how books flowed between them and the workings of their bibliographical minds:

43 Manuscript in Isabel Shea’s hand, box 52, folder 5 Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. Unfortunately, the only indiscernible words in this manuscript are “his tomes,” which could possibly also be read as “his loves.” The manuscript purportedly related to a preface to a new edition of Charlevoix, *History and General Description of New France* “written by Noah Farnham Morrison and Emma I. Shea” and “published by Mr. Francis Harper of New York.” Harper published this in limited edition (750 copies) in 1900. The edition includes a “new memoir and bibliography of the translator [J. G. Shea] by Noah Farnham Morrison.” Isabel Shea is not credited.


45 Donald C. Dickinson, *Dictionary of American Book Collectors* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 202-203. On Lenox’s collecting interests, Dickinson states, “When Lenox began to buy . . . his orders were largely for Bibles and Testaments, but gradually they came to include incunabula, Americana, and the Elizabethan authors. In 1847 [Henry] Stevens helped Lenox to obtain a Gutenberg Bible at the Wilkes sale in London for £500, a price the local papers referred to as ‘mad.’” (202)

February 16, 1858, New York (Shea)
What has become of your Bibliography of the Bibles? I wish to announce it to the world and help you work to work it off. Hurry it up there fore, that the world may not slumber in darkness.

March 29, 1858, Albany (O’Callaghan)
Would you be so good as to let me know at your earliest convenience the date of the first Catholic Bible printed in the United States – by whom – its form &c and such other particulars as you may happen to know respecting it.

March 29, 1858, New York (Shea)
It nearly cost me my life to have you asking about the Bibles. I have had no end of queries about them and purpose getting up a bibliographical account. The first was a 4º printed by Carey, Stewart & Co. in Philadelphia in 1790. I will send you full title, pages, size, & if you desire it, or to prove its actual existence will send you my copy by Express as I did to Mr. Livermore of Boston, who wished to satisfy himself that it was really American and not English work. Carey printed another 4º in 1805 calling it ‘the 1st American after the 5th Dublin,’ so that many suppose it the first. It is strange that Carey in his sort of autobiography omits all mention of these two, though he goes into long details about his Protestant edition.

April 2, 1858, New York (Shea)
I send you my Grandfather’s Bible by express and enclose my last list of Bibles, having already communicated the same to Mr. Lenox when sending him a Testament that I had met with.

April 27, 1858, Albany (O’Callaghan)
I’m still floundering among the Bibles. I’m at a loss to determine whether there was an Edition in 1804 by Carey or the Douay &c. Can you set me right?

May 4, 1858, New York (Shea)
As to the Bibles, I have heard of the 1804 Bible from Mr. Lenox, but like the 1791 Bible, I believe it a mistake. I have had my hands at one time on another nine or ten of the edition of 1805 and found all to bear that date: none of 1804 and none of what I should be less surprised to see, copies with a substituted title of 1805-11, that is years during which copies remained on hand.

May 5, 1858, New York (Shea)
I cannot give the title of Carey’s autobiography, seeing that the only copy I ever laid my eyes upon had no title page, it was an 8º pamphlet of about 100 pp. Haverty a dealer in second hand books had it: and has it still on his catalogue, though not on his shelves, as I find to-day. . . When Haverty got it I looked up . . . what was said of his 1790 Bible, and to my surprise found nothing. He spoke
of his magazine and then of his resolution to begin publishing books. This leads him to speak of his (Prot) Bible and the means he took to ensure its correctness. . . . As it gave no information in the points that interested me I made no notes.

May 9, 1858, Albany (O’Callaghan)
Your lists of Testaments is not complete. Nor never will it be so long as Hoe is alive and [sham] presses are moving! You sent me a Mem. of a Testament (Rheims) by Care[ry] 4to. 1805. Was not this a part of the Bible of 1805? Am I to understand that he printed . . . a Separate Edition of the Testament (Rheims) in that year? I am not ‘dabbling in Bibles of all Stripes.’ My search is confined to Bibles & Tests. printed in English in America prior to 1806.

May 12, 1858, Worcester, MA (S. F. Haven)
The title of Carey’s autobiography, in our library, is ‘Auto/-biographical Sketches. / In a series of letters addressed to a friend / . . .’ There is no date on the title page, but at the end is the date of Aug. 1, 1829.47

Really, the “curious incident” was a misunderstanding between Shea and O’Callaghan regarding who would publish on the subject of early Bibles in the United States.

O’Callaghan wrote to Shea on March 31, 1858: “But I do not wish to interfere with your purpose of getting up a bibliographical account, as you can do more justice to the subject than I can pretend to do. Indeed, my paper cannot in any way interfere with your design, as I understand you intend to confine yourself to Catholic Bibles.”48 Guilday called Shea’s bibliography a “little volume;”49 though fastidious, it was in every sense, little compared to the comprehensive O’Callaghan’s List. On his bibliography, Shea wrote to O’Callaghan: “My Bible list was spoiled by the printer, who in his economy thought it

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47 The Shea and Haven correspondence are from the Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vols. 13 and 14, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC. The O’Callaghan correspondence is from box 50, folder 4, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

48 E. B. O’Callaghan to J. G. Shea, March 31, 1858, quoted in Guilday, John Gilmary Shea, 63-64.

49 Guilday, John Gilmary Shea, 64. Shea’s Bibliographical Account of Catholic Bibles, Testaments, and Other Portions of Scripture (New York: Cramoisy Press, 1859) was 48 pages, duodecimo. O’Callaghan’s A List of Editions of Holy Scriptures and Parts Thereof Printed in America Previous to 1860 (Albany, NY: Munsell and Rowland, 1861) was 415 pages, octavo.
extravagant to print it an 8° and made it a 16°. I will have some bound in a day or two, and will send you what you wish, provided you do not make capital in your list of ‘Not in Shea.’”\(^{50}\) But as Guilday highlights: “Dr. Shea’s study did more than list the editions of the Catholic Bible; it pointed out that no Catholic edition in the United States was accurate.”\(^{51}\) But what was to be done?

This intensive study of American Bibles revealed to both men numerous textual errors, beyond the scope of bibliography. O’Callaghan shied from censuring these errors: “We give their titles; describe their contents and point out any errors met in them, whether typographical or textual, in the same manner and with the same animus as you would collate sundry editions of Homer or Shakespeare.”\(^{52}\) He was a bibliographer, an archivist historian: “We only describe books as we find them and herein I think we do not overstep the line of the scholar or sit in judgment of others.”\(^{53}\) However, according to Isabel Shea’s manuscript, Shea did not entirely agree: “with the concurrence of Archbishop Kenrick [Shea] made out a list of errata and induced many publishers to correct the plates they had.”\(^{54}\) This, of course, would necessitate a significant monetary investment on the part of the publishers, to change their stock plates and to create new editions. And remember, Shea had invested at this time in a stereotyping and

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\(^{51}\) Guilday, *John Gilmary Shea*, 64.

\(^{52}\) E. B. O’Callaghan to J. G. Shea, March 31, 1858, quoted in Guilday, *John Gilmary Shea*, 65.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 65-66.

\(^{54}\) Box 52, folder 5, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.
electrotyping firm and was in financial distress.55 True, Shea did produce a new reprint edition for the publisher Sadlier in 1871, a “Pocket Bible” based on the Challoner Bible of 1740; however, it irked him that he did not receive any publication credit for his work, and Isabel Shea’s testimony was likely intended as an after-the-fact affirmation of editorship, where the book itself provided none.56 This type of publication was at the heart of Shea’s work over his lifetime, and this work informed what he collected. John Gilmary Shea and Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan lived through the anti-Catholic tenor of 1850s New York, during the height of Nativist thought and influence, but they did not emerge from it in the same way. Though a similar scholar, O’Callaghan collected and wrote to document history, not to correct it.

Like his mentor O’Callaghan, Shea was an archivist historian, and generally speaking, he exerted his corrective proclivities in data collection. Beyond Bibles, he was a true bibliographer of all things Catholic, including, as stated above, anti-Catholic texts:

55 John Gilmary Shea to E. B. O’Callaghan, June 30, 1858, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol. 14, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Shea had previously been employed with the publishing firm of Edward Dunigan and Brother (James B. Kirker), as had Patrick O’Shea, who left the firm and started his own publishing business in 1854. Both enterprises specialized in the publication of Catholic books. Apparently, J. G. Shea wrote in 1856 a defamatory circular regarding Patrick O’Shea, who then sued for libel (O’Shea v. Kirker et al.). J. G. Shea and Kirker were both found culpable, to the cost of $600 for Shea and $150 for Kirker. They appealed, and appealed again; but the judgment was affirmed. Joseph S. Bosworth, Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Superior Court of the City of New York (Albany, NY: W. C. Little, 1861), 17: 120-139. The sum of $600 would have been huge for Shea, who in 1855 made less than $1,000 in a year and a half, as documented in a July, 1855 letter to O’Callaghan: “Your friend Shea is not over bright: he works too much for nothing: he has made about five hundred dollars by schoolbook, this last year and a half: half as much by magazine articles, and being a clerk gets a small salary, so that he lives. He looks forward to being a publisher and not an author.” Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol.10, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

56 Peter Guilday goes into to detail about Shea’s disappointment in this matter: “Dr. Shea honestly wanted the public credit he knew his labors deserved; and he confesses to the Archbishop in a letter dated February 4, 1871, that “the credit and responsibility was the chief inducement for my undertaking the task, not the pitance Mr. Sadlier offered, and finally in his usually unjust way, refused to pay me.”’ Guilday, John Gilmary Shea, 75-76. According to Guilday, Sadlier eventually credited Shea, and Shea even assisted with further translations for the second edition (1876) of the “Pocket Bible.”
“I am becoming a bibliographer, for this [the Bible bibliography] is not my only project: another is ‘Catholic and Anti-Catholic books printed in the United States prior to 1830,’ with a list of all books by Catholic authors in the country to the present times.”57 This was the bibliographical work that Shea shared with Father Finotti; however, this work would not be realized until 1939, when Father Wilfred Parsons published his bibliography—largely based on overflow collections he found in the attic of Georgetown’s Healy building, including books that had been collected by Shea and Finotti58—*Early Catholic Americana: A List of Books and Other Works by Catholic Authors in the United States, 1729-1830* (New York: Macmillan, 1930). While at Georgetown, Father Parsons had access both to Shea’s and Finotti’s personal papers, in addition to Shea’s library: “Father Parson’s knew that both Finotti and Shea had begun work on a revision of the *Bibliographia*, and he was convinced that . . . an entirely new bibliography based on more modern methods was in order.”59 It should also be noted that Father Parsons had access to John Gilmary Shea’s extensively annotated and interleaved volume of Finotti’s *Bibliographia Catholica Americana* retained at the time in the Georgetown University Archives.60 John Gilmary Shea’s collection inspired another researcher to continue his exhaustive quest for bibliographic comprehension.


59 Ibid.

60 This copy now resides box 24, folder 15 of the John Gilmary Shea Papers, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC.
One last anecdote will end this chapter-long bibliographic discourse; and it belongs to the ever-jovial Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan. Pursuing books had so much become the occupation of O’Callaghan and Shea, that it even interrupted dreams:

The other night I dreamed I was in Paris, hurrying to the Quai Voltaire, to the stalls of old books, in which I was making an investment—oh such rare editions of scarce books on America—so cheap—and I was so busy securing them, when another Bibliomaniac more eager than I, gave me a shove in the ribs. I turned round to bring him to an account for his rudeness when I heard somebody say, complainingly—Oh! pray don’t snore! And lo! I awoke and like dew before the morning sun, or like Snow before the warm winds of Spring, or like the clouds on Mrs. Shea’s sweet face before the welcome presence of one you know, books and bibliomaniacs, Paris and Quai Voltaire vanished. . . . My real vocation is old books selling.61

And this was a long-standing joke, as they had been procuring books for each other (read selling) for several years. They both loved their families, and they both loved their collections; and both collections and men sustained each other. Isabel Shea fondly recalled O’Callaghan’s own library in a letter to Peter Guilday: “I remember the Doctor’s library very well, when I visited there I built houses of the Jesuit Relations as they were just the right size.”62 Books are for use.63

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61 E. B. O’Callaghan to J. G. Shea, February 9, 1859, box 50, folder 4, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

62 Emma Isabel Shea to Peter Guilday, October 26, 1925, box 51, folder 2, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

CHAPTER FIVE

ON THE LASTING IMPACT OF JOHN GILMARY SHEA’S COLLECTING

Dr. Shea’s large library was collected for real use.

—Emma Isabel Shea

When John Gilmary Shea was still a scholastic in Montreal, he did not have the means to collect books; however, he did have the inclination. In 1852, he wrote to his new friend, E. B. O’Callaghan, the recently appointed archivist of New York: “I have troubles within and without that sometimes almost. . . .” Here, Shea, always conscious of economy, left a rare blank space in his letter, but he soon concluded that “God is good.” In the same letter, Shea focused on where his life was trending, having spent his years as a scholastic steadfastly working on bibliographic endeavors with his first mentor, Father Felix Martin. On book collecting, Shea stated:

In a catalogue of books on American History at [Amsterdam] which I saw in Mr. Moore’s hands the other day, a copy of this set down 26 vols 4º for I think only $30, so cheap that had I a library of my own I would risk getting it, as it is a book almost unknown, yet containing a mass of matter nowhere else to be found. If any library is getting books of the kind, I think it worth suggesting.

From this excerpt, we can discern certainly that John Gilmary Shea, aged twenty-eight years, had not seriously started collecting his library. This was Shea’s crisis year, when

1 From a transcript by Emma Isabel Shea about her father John Gilmary Shea, box 52, folder 5, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.


3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. The price would be approximately $1.15 per volume in 1852, which in today’s dollars would be roughly $33 per volume. Is this really inexpensive, even for Shea? Much depends on context. A more detailed discussion of price as well as the contexts of buying power occurs below.
he struggled with whether he should become a Jesuit after all his study. He did not; but he did become an historian, a bibliographer, and a collector for the next forty years of his life. How can we gauge the lasting impact of a life so spent? One method is by his collection: its content and its subsequent usefulness.

In 1924, the Catholic historian Father Peter Guilday made a plea for the establishment of an Institute for American Church History.⁵ Harking back on John Gilmary Shea’s own plea for a National Catholic Library some thirty-eight years before, Guilday expanded that vision with his own particular agenda. He compared the one hundredth anniversary of Shea’s birth with the creation of the Görres Society at the anniversary of Johann Joseph Görres’ birth in 1876. Guilday’s conceived Institute would comprise a National Catholic Archives, a National Catholic Library, and the Institute itself, “for the training of the students.”⁶ For the Archives/Library, Guilday considered the most preeminent existing collections of Catholic history to date: “We have three collections which contain in embryo these National Catholic Archives—the Shea Collection at Georgetown University, where there is one of the best equipped Archives in this country; the Baltimore Catholic Archives, which are national in scope during the years that Baltimore was the sole diocese (1789-1808) and the sole archdiocese (1808-1846) in the United States; and the Catholic Archives of America, at the University of Notre Dame.”⁷ Guilday considered making photo-static copies—the state-of-the-art

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⁵ Peter Guilday, *On the Creation of an Institute for American Church History* (Washington, DC, 1924).

⁶ Ibid., 12.

⁷ Ibid., 14.
technology of his time—of the major items held by the three institutions, thus forming one archive for the scholar of Catholic Church history. As the cost was far too prohibitive, this was not to be.⁸

Peter Guilday was in a position to speak knowledgably about John Gilmary Shea’s contemporary-to-himself impact as a Catholic historian and bibliographer. Guilday followed in Shea’s footsteps as a champion of Catholic Church history. In fact, as a researcher Guilday was in a position to reap the benefits of Shea’s deep bibliographical endeavors, and especially when those efforts complimented Guilday’s own publications, such as his biographical work on Archbishop John Carroll.

Nevertheless, the primary resources mentioned in Shea’s bibliographical citations in works such as the History of the Catholic Church in the United States were not at Guilday’s fingertips, as any scholar throughout history would desire. What did it matter that the “Shea Collection” resided at Georgetown College throughout Guilday’s tenure at The Catholic University of America?⁹ All scholars seek the convenience of their own bookshelves; and the equivalent in our ultra-modern world are the virtual shelves of digitized collections.¹⁰

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⁸ Even in today’s world of mass digitization, the cost would still be prohibitive to realize Guilday’s vision, due to production costs and energy costs. In Guilday’s ideal world, his envisioned Institute would have formed prior to the institutionalization of the resources he desired; that is, John Gilmary Shea’s collections (books and manuscripts) at Georgetown University, the Maryland Province Archives (on deposit at Georgetown University), and the vast resources at Notre Dame.

⁹ These institutions are approximately six miles apart.

¹⁰ Note that Peter Guilday’s envisioned photo-static collections are basically the same concept as today’s efforts at mass-digitization. Both might deliver surrogate copies of originals physically housed elsewhere. The only difference is method and scale of delivery.
But could the collectors of the past have envisioned the collective collections of today, and further, could they have intended them? As noted in chapter two, Thomas Jefferson and Sir John Soane made efforts—although their approaches differed—to keep their collections together and usable; they saw value in the bodies of knowledge that they had assembled over their lifetimes, and they ensured that these collected works could be used as a whole, not piecemeal as were the auctioned collections Shea himself derided as “scattered to the winds” and into many, many hands. And Shea’s had been one of those pairs of hands, reaping benefits from collections like J. M. Finotti’s. In fact, the auction block was the staple of collectors like Shea and his mentor, E. B. O’Callaghan; there are numerous letters between the two scholars mentioning upcoming auctions and booksellers’ sales.11 At least one collector of Shea’s era resisted collective collections, that is, merging collections physically and/or virtually to be utilized by researchers as a whole. Brigadier General and noted incunabula collector Rush C. Hawkins publicly opposed the New York Public Library’s acquisition of the Lenox Library, the collection culled and cultivated by New York bibliophile, James Lenox. Hawkins wrote several editorials on the matter in the public forum of the day: newspapers, and including The New York Times. What Hawkins opposed flies in the face of the missions of public libraries today: to encourage access for all to knowledge; to promote lifelong learning. Hawkins did not want the rarities that Lenox had gathered, over a lifetime of great effort

11 For example, Shea wrote to O’Callaghan in 1856: “Corwin’s books will be sold in October, so that you can enjoy a book sale and Mrs. O’C will pay the piper.” John Gilmary Shea to E. B. O’Callaghan, September 12, 1856, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol. 11, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
and expense, circulating in the hands of the public user. But the New York Public Library is a Mecca of knowledge for the public user; it is an altogether American institution, with its marbled halls not for the select, but for all. There is such a thing as freedom of information, and not all collectors of rarities resisted researchers: Shea did not. Indeed, James Lenox himself provided the means for public—albeit a limited public—access to the scarce texts of the Jesuit Relations by underwriting the publication of John Gilmary Shea’s Cramoisy series.

There are many values to books. The anecdote below from an 1892 issue of The New York Times both reinforces and negates some common notions about rare books:

A lady left some very precious first editions of a book in three volumes in a hansom while she went into a shop—a risky thing in itself to do. When she came out of the shop she couldn’t find the hansom, which had been made to move on by a policeman, and in despair took another and just saved the train which she had

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13 Rush C. Hawkins made an effort to avoid the “publicizing,” if you will, of his own collection of rarities. Donald C. Dickinson, Dictionary of American Book Collectors (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 155: “For many years Hawkins and his wife, Annmary Brown, daughter of a distinguished Rhode Island family, planned to build a Gutenberg memorial to house their treasures. When she died in 1903 the general decided to dedicate it as the Annmary Brown Memorial Library. The building, as planned, also served as a mausoleum for his wife and himself. As he remarked to his librarian, Margaret Stillwell, his body would serve as ‘an anchor,’ since he believed that anyone wanting to move the books would think twice before they moved the books and him.” According to Brown University Library’s website, “The book and manuscript collections, assembled by General Hawkins and formerly housed in the Memorial, were transferred to the John Hay Library in 1990.” Additional information is available at “Annmary Brown Memorial,” Brown University Library, http://library.brown.edu/about/amb/ (accessed January 29, 2011). Although the books and manuscripts are gone, General Hawkins and his wife remain.
to catch at Charing Cross. After waiting for an hour and a half, the cabman thought there was something queer going on and endeavored to find his fare, without success, of course. Then he looked inside the cab, saw the books and some parcels, and conveyed them all to Scotland Yard. And here comes the pith of the story. The lady applied the following day for her precious books and got them. It was suggested that she pay a certain quite adequate sum as recompense to the cabman. But the lady was indignant. That sum, she averred, did not in any degree represent the percentage due on the enormous value of the tomes. They were worth something stupendous. She mentioned what Quaritch valued them at. And quite cheerfully she paid a sum that made a comfortable nest-egg for the cabman. She also made the Scotland Yard official understand something about books that he hadn’t a notion of before.14

Certainly, hiring the expertise of an antiquarian book dealer would be one method for pricing a valuable collection. Another method would be deriving relative values based on comparable books that sold at auction. This seems to have been Shea’s method for pricing his library. Amongst the items in his library catalogue are collection catalogues, useful for the scholarship of a bibliographer and historian as he sought to locate items of interest to his research. For example, the following occur in Shea’s catalog; none of which have been retained at Georgetown University Library:

Catalogue of the Library of the Seminary of Mt. St. Mary’s of the West, Cincinnati, O. Interleaved with Writing paper. 8vo, half morocco N.Y. 1873

CATALOGUE of the Library of the New York Historical Society. 8vo, cloth N. Y. 1859

63 CATALOGUE of the Library of T. W. Field, sold May 24, 1875. 8vo, 376 p., half calf, uncut.

Prices annexed; extensive collection of books relating to Indians prepared with notes by Joseph Sabin.

CATALOGUE of Maps and Surveys in Secretary of State’s and other Offices in Albany. 8vo, sheep* Albany, 1859

CATALOGUE of the Library and Antiquarian Collection of John Allan, Esq., with the names of Purchasers and the price each article sold for, . . . . remarks by Wm. Gowans. Particulars of the remarkable sale, which realized nearly $40,000.

CATALOGUE of the Library of the late Charles I. Bushnell, sold in New York, April 1883. (Priced in ink.) 8º paper. N.Y.


It is easy to understand why Shea would have collected the Catalogue of the Library of the New York Historical Society; he was a member and remarked in his letters to E. B. O’Callaghan that he used its library for research purposes. Also, there are frequent references to George Henry Moore in their correspondences; Moore was librarian for the Society. And the Albany catalogue was created under the auspices of O’Callaghan himself. But again, these catalogues were altogether useful: Corwin’s catalogue documented Americana, as did Allan’s, Field’s, and Bushnell’s. For pricing his own library, however, Shea often cited two sources. One was “Brinley,” which refers to the Catalogue of the American Library of the Late George Brinley of Connecticut (Hartford,

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* For example, Shea wrote the following to O’Callaghan in 1847: “The Historical Society library I have found very useful to me in the lives of Church Martyrs.” John D. Shea to E. B. O’Callaghan, January 11, 1847, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol. 3, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
1878-93), published in five parts; prices of items sold were inserted at the end of each volume. The other was “Maisonneuve,” a French bookselling firm that produced catalogues such as *Bibliotheca Americana: Catalogue Raisonné d'une très-précieuse Collection de Livres Anciens et Modernes sur l'Amérique et les Philippines* (Paris, 1867), “classés par ordre alphabetique de noms d'auteurs” (classified alphabetically by author names). As previously mentioned, a typical example of a catalog entry priced by Shea would be the following clipping that Shea amended with indications that he also verified the pricing listed and added additional values:

CREVXIUS, P. FRANCIS. Historiae Canadensis Sive Novae Franciae Libri Decem. Ad Annum Vsque Christi MDCLVI. Map and 13 plates. 4to, velum
Paris, Cramoisy, 1664
Rare, perfect copy. Priced by Dufosse Paris, this year at 300 fr, [which Shea corrected to 500 fr.] $60. Brinley’s brought $80.18

On this entry, Shea had crossed out $60 and wrote $100; also, he wrote “Maisonneuve $80.”18 This entry proves that Shea knew he had an undeniable rarity in his collection.

Recall that the clipping here transcribed was from the *Catalogue of the Library of the Late E. B. O'Callaghan*; and O’Callaghan’s copy fetched $42.50 at auction.19

Thus far, this thesis has avoided a discussion of price. Price is complicated.

Certainly measures exist, comparing the buying power of today with that of earlier times, especially the nineteenth century of John Gilmary Shea’s lifetime, as prices of goods

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17 Shea, *Library Catalog*, under the letter “C.”

18 Ibid.

were documented like no other time before it. But the complication occurs with concepts like buying power and value. For example, buying power meant something different to nineteenth-century collectors of means like James Lenox and Rush C. Hawkins. These collectors purchased world-renowned rarities, such as Gutenberg imprints and numerous other incunabula. Poor Shea owned only a scant handful of incunabula—probably less than five according to his catalog—and he certainly did not have the means to spend the rough equivalent of two and a half year’s salary on a single book like the incunabulum of all incunabula, the Gutenberg Bible.

In his 1891 letter to Father Dougherty, Shea described his incunabula as such:

“There are rare early works not connected with this country, but in place in a Catholic Library, Bible of 1494, Testament of 1506; Mamotrectus or Explanation of Hard Words in the Bible, 1483; a work on the Mass about 1470, with the old form of the Hail Mary written on the last page, and defaced by some Reformer; De Triplice Vita, 1489…."


21 Shea made less than $1,000 per year in the mid-1850s, as he indicated in a July, 1855 letter to E. B. O’Callaghan, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan Papers, vol.10, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC. For a consumer good, such as a rare book, £500 (the price Lenox paid for his Gutenberg Bible in 1847) would average $2,400 in that year, using the MeasuringWorth “Real Value” conversion based on the Consumer Price Index/Retail Price Index. MeasuringWorth is a commercial site produced under scholarly auspices, with the mission “to make available to the public the highest quality and most reliable historical data on important economic aggregates, with particular emphasis on nominal measures.” Additional information is available at “About MeasuringWorth,” MeasuringWorth, http://www.measuringworth.com (accessed January 28, 2011). The site is particularly helpful at generating thought on concepts of monetary value based on the contexts of individual circumstance. This author has perused other resources on the history of wages, prices, and purchasing power, such as *The Value of a Dollar: Prices and Incomes in the United States, 1860-2004*, 3rd edition (Millerton, NY: Grey House, 2004). Incidentally, $2,400 would have the roughly equivalent purchasing power as $64,500.00 today, which would be a pittance price for a Gutenberg Bible.

Shea’s copy of *Mamotrectus* is by no means a thing of beauty. It is precisely as the clipping in his catalog describes; small and half covered in old cloth:

Marchesinus (Joannes). *Mamotrectus [sive exposition in singulos libros Bibliorum]*. Small 8vo, oak boards, half covered with old cloth, with clasp.

*Venetiis: Per Franciscum de Hailbrun, 1483*

Neatly printed in Gothic type, double columns. A fly-leaf at beginning and one at end are clipped, from a vellum Manuscript, one of them containing an initial letter. The work, which was first published in 1470 is a very curious compilation intended by the Author for the use of the more ignorant of the clergy.²³

But to Shea, this book would have appealed as a compliment to his bibliographic work on the Bible. Unfortunately, no price exists on the clipping, so one can only conjecture how much (or little) Shea may have paid. Another of Shea’s incunabula merited a display label as evidenced by his catalog:

*Marsilius Ficinus*
*De Triplici Vita*

Printed in Paris in 1489

400 years old.²⁴

This label describes a significant work by the Neoplatonist priest and philosopher, Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499); and again, Shea collected an imperfect copy that lacked the “Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum.” That is, its last nine leaves are wanting. But the text would have appealed to Shea, as it places humans as comprehending beings between the physical and spiritual worlds.²⁵ There are many values to books.

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²³ Shea, *Library Catalog*, under letter “M.”

²⁴ Shea, *Library Catalog*, under “[Miscellaneous Grouping I].”

In chapters three and four, discussions centered on what John Gilmary Shea collected in terms of what he wrote, and especially as compared to the collectors of his scope. In other words, these chapters focused on what the author expected to find in Shea’s collection. But there were items that should have been documented in Shea’s catalog. For example, Shea’s catalog does not have even a handwritten slip for Saint Thomas More’s *Utopia*, even though Shea specifically cited this extreme rarity in his letter to Father Dougherty: “the original edition of Blessed Thomas More’s Utopia.” In addition, Shea had collected two copies of a rare xylographic book by Father Gaspar Castner (1665-1709)—printed circa 1700—that described the original tomb of Francis Xavier; however, he mentions neither copy in his catalog. But his daughter Isabel remembered these rare books in particular, in a scrappy list in her hand found amongst Father Peter Guilday’s papers: “list of some of the library,” which included, “1516 Original Edition of Sir Thomas Moor’s Utopia,” and “Quint Life of St. Francis Xavier.

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27 Gaspar Castner, *Relatio Sepulturae Magno Orientis Apostolo S. Francisco Xavierio Erectae in Insula Sanciano Saeculari MDCC* (Peking? 1700). The copy is in the Rare Books Collections, Georgetown University Library, located at Shea BX 4700 .F8 C3 1700 Vault. As evidenced by a handwritten note by Shea himself tipped into the volume, Shea’s second copy was slightly bibliographically different; it was also less complete, lacking the map and the tomb design. The second copy had been loaned by Shea to a New York library—that is now part of the Woodstock Theological Center Library—prior to Shea’s death; and there it remains as part of one of the great Jesuitica collections in the United States (at location Woodstock Shrub Oak BX8319 .X3 C39). The more complete copy came to Georgetown University Library in 1892. Approximately thirteen copies of this xylographic (or woodblock) book are noted by WorldCat.
printed in Chinese. Each page engraved on a block of wood & printed from that. 1800.”

Even in the incomplete state of Shea’s Library Catalog, one can only conjecture as to why he did not document these items, and especially Utopia. Perhaps the family felt particularly sentimental about the volumes? Correspondence in the John Gilmary Shea Papers extent at Georgetown University Library intimates that Utopia was not readily discovered when Shea’s library was initially unpacked in Washington, DC. Isabel Shea assured the rector father that she had packed the volume with her own hand, as observed by her sister Ada, and sent the volume with items directed to Richards himself. As the volume exists with Shea’s bookplate in the Rare Books collections as Georgetown University Library, it must have been located eventually.

While systematically examining Shea’s catalog, a few items stood out. Even though all items were on subject for Shea, some seemed to have double appeal, as books that could interest the other residents of his home, who were his wife, his mother-in-law, and his two daughters: for example, nineteenth-century gift books with numerous steel engravings, books of poetry, books by widely-read authors of the day, and practical books for a learning household. Below are examples transcribed from Shea’s catalog:

28 Undated manuscript list in box 50, folder 6, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. Note that Isabel Shea incorrectly dates the Castner; its 1700 date is a circa, but it was produced within Castner’s lifetime.

29 Various correspondence from Emma Isabel Shea to Rev. J. Havens Richards, S. J., box 24, John Gilmary Shea Papers, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC. Rev. J. Havens Richards, S. J. kept meticulously indexed letter books, documenting his outgoing correspondence during the years he was president of Georgetown College. However, this researcher did not find copies of Richards’ letters to Isabel Shea on the topic of Utopia; thus, this story must remain one-sided.

30 Rare Books Collections, Georgetown University Library, at location Shea HX811 1516 .A1 Vault.
BURTON (W. E.) Cyclopaedia of Wit and Humor. American, Irish, Scotch, and English. 24 portraits on steel, and many hundred woodcuts. Royal 8vo N. Y., 1872


ELLETT, Mrs. Queens of American Society. 14 fine portraits. Proofs on India paper. 8º cloth New York, 1867

Hall’s (Mr and Mrs) Ireland and its Scenery and Character, with 500 beautiful engravings on steel and wood by Creswick, Harvey, &c., 3 large vols, royal 8vo, new, half morocco, gilt leaves (pub at £3, 3s), fine copy 1850

[Heaton, Mrs. Charles] History of the Life of Albrecht Dürer, with a Translation of his Letters and Journals and some Account of his Works. By Mrs. Charles Heaton. 31 illustrations. Royal 8vo, gilt Lond. 1870

GRISWOLD. Republican Court; or, American Society in the Days of Washington. With 21 fine steel portraits of distinguished women. Imperial 8vo, morocco extra gilt edges N.Y., 1855

LOSSING (BENSON J.) The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution, etc. With eleven hundred engravings on wood, By Lossing and Barrett; chiefly from original sketches by the Author. 2 vols. royal 8vo, roan. N.Y., 1859

Thoreau, Henry D Cape Cod 12º 252 pp cloth Boston, 1865

Webster, Noah. An American Dictionary of the English Language. Thoroughly revised by Chauncey A. Goodrich and Noah Porter 4º morocco Springfield 1878
Of these sample titles, only Griswold’s *Republican Court* and Thoreau’s *Cape Cod* still exist in the Shea Collection.\(^{31}\) As stated, these books had double appeal, for practical family use and entertainment and as books that supported Shea’s work with the Frank Leslie publications: his work that paid his bills. Some even supported his bibliographical hunting and gathering of American Catholic imprints.

It is impossible to say whether all of the books Shea listed in his incomplete catalog were packed and shipped to Georgetown. There was a stipulation in his agreement with Father Richards that some books could be kept by the family for sentimental reasons; and certainly, some of the above titles could have qualified. But just as certainly, most of Shea’s books were not considered rare when they came to Georgetown; they filled a significant portion of the new Riggs Memorial Library, a space described in detail by John Gilmary Shea in his *Centenary History*. The point here is that most of Shea’s books circulated to faculty, students, and other researchers for years before what remained of them were culled into the Rare Books collections that exist today.\(^{32}\) There is no guarantee that a circulating book will ever make it back to its shelf.

\(^{31}\) Rare Books Collections, Georgetown University Library, at location Shea F72 .C3 T434 1865.

\(^{32}\) To honor the one hundredth anniversary of the University purchase of John Gilmary Shea’s library, Georgetown University Library held an exhibition, “The Library of John Gilmary Shea: An Exhibition of Rare Books and Manuscripts Relating for the Most Part to American Catholic History” and an event on October 16, 1992 at which Rev. Gerald A. Fogarty, S. J. read a paper, “It’s tough to be first: John Gilmary Shea and the writing of American Catholic history.” At that time, the hope was to complete the re-cataloging of Shea’s book and pamphlet collection by the end of 1993. The manuscript materials that were donated by Shea’s widow and daughters in 1893 were not processed until 2000. This particular thesis has revealed items still in Georgetown University Library’s circulating collections as well as items in other cataloged rare books collections that were certainly Shea’s; thus, the re-cataloging will continue. For more information on the 1992 exhibition and event, refer to “Three Anniversaries,” *Georgetown University Library Associates Newsletter* 31 (August 1992): 2; and “Library Associates Programs,” *Georgetown University Library Associates Newsletter* 32 (February 1993): 5.
space once checked out by a reader; and, there is equally no guarantee that a given book will survive the many hands and uses of circulation over its lifetime. Books are lost every day; books are damaged beyond repair every day. Nevertheless, Mrs. Sophie Shea wrote expressly to Father Richards for a codicil to the agreement that any of Shea’s family would have access to his collection.\footnote{Mrs. Sophie Shea and her daughters never received the codicil. J. Havens Richards to Mrs. Sophie Shea, April 11, 1892 (transcript), J. Havens Richards, S. J. Papers, box 5, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC. Specifically, Richards writes: “With regards to the clause securing access to the Shea collection for the family and relatives of your late husband, I think there will be no difficulty in giving legal assurance to that effect within the limits proper to such an institution as ours…. We already give access to our library during certain hours of the day to any scholars who desire to use it for literary or historical work. We have had no applications from ladies, and I am not sure whether we would be willing to bind ourselves to extend the same privilege to them or not. Again, if Georgetown should ever become the scholasticate of the province, I do not know what rules might be considered advisable with regard to the use of the library.” In an April 27, 1892 letter to Mrs. Shea (transcript), Richards states further: “The Fathers were, of course, all in favor of allowing to the Shea family access to his Collection after it shall have been deposited in our library. This I do not hesitate to promise you positively in my own name and that of the Faculty, who concur with me entirely in the matter. At the same time I am not ready to make this a part of our contract. Like yourself, I can not see any reason which should possibly arise to prevent our allowing this access. As the library is at present situated, ladies are not denied the entre to it, and I can not see any objection to yourself or your daughters spending any amount of time there, that you might desire, reading or studying to or otherwise making use of the collection. I wish you also to consider the whole of our Library at your disposal in the same manner of the same purpose. …This promise will be carried out faithfully and I beg you to preserve this letter in testimony of it.”}

She also dearly wished for photographs of where the collection would reside, as if sentimentally connecting the loss of her husband’s books with the loss of Shea himself. And as his books were so much a part of his life, this was not only understandable, but likely true. Recall Isabel Shea’s sentimental recollections of her father working in his library with his Bibles, and her word “tomes” looking greatly like the word “loves.”\footnote{Three manuscripts professionals with finely tuned skills at discerning handwriting could not agree whether Isabel Shea had written: “Dr. Shea’s large library was collected for real use, he was fond of calling his books ‘his tomes’…” or “Dr. Shea’s large library was collected for real use, he was fond of calling his books ‘his loves’…” “His loves” certainly makes for a sentimental reading, but appropriate for a loving daughter remembering her father. Box 52, folder 5, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.} Of course, Father Richards...
supplied Mrs. Shea with her photographic memorials of where John Gilmary Shea’s tomes (and loves) would reside.\textsuperscript{35}

In her notes to Peter Guilday, Shea’s only biographer to date, Emma Isabel Shea transcribed the following, purportedly written by the renowned General and collector of incunabula, Rush C. Hawkins:

Connected with the world of books there is a fraternity of men that the greater, the outside, world know very little of. The inhabitants of this inner world are exclusive, and have their own particular set of pleasures and pains, which are unknown to others not of the fraternity. The real lovers of fine books, who love them because of their conditions, their contents, and traditions connected with them are the most loyal subjects of this little kingdom, and they usually spend the larger portion of their lives in the refined society of their silent friends which give so much and ask only for reasonable care in return.

To this narrow circle of exceptionals our country has contributed a fair quota of distinguished names. Among those who have passed away may be mentioned Thomas P. Barton, Joseph G. Cogswell, Peter Force, John Carter Brown, J. Carson Brevoort, Henry C. Murphy, John R. Bartlett Henry Stevens, Almon W. Griswold, S. L. M. Barlow, Charles H. Kalbfleisch, John G. Shea, and lastly, George Henry Moore…\textsuperscript{36}

Here, Isabel Shea acknowledges the place her father held in the community of great American collectors. But not only did her father collect, he furthered the dissemination of primary Catholic sources through series like the Cramoisy reprints. Remember, that Thomas Dibdin prescribed “reprinting of scarce and intrinsically valuable works” as a means of preventing the disorder of bibliomania. And as stated in previous chapters,

\textsuperscript{35} There are multiple letters from Sophie Shea and Emma Isabel Shea to Rev. J. Havens Richards, S. J., box 24, John Gilmary Shea Papers, Georgetown University Library, Washington, DC.

\textsuperscript{36} Transcript by Emma Isabel Shea given to Peter Guilday, box 52, folder 5, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. Isabel Shea cites this text as from \textit{The Times} 1892 and by Rush C. Hawkins; however, this seems not to be a correct citation, as nothing by Hawkins of this nature was published in \textit{The New York Times} in 1892. This article was, however, published in \textit{The Collector}: Rush C. Hawkins, “A True Bibliophile,” \textit{The Collector} 3 (July 15, 1892): 271.
Shea’s publications did much to extend the bibliographies of scholars in Catholic Church history, not the least of which was Father Peter Guilday. According to Henry Warden Bowden:

Shea labored to bring together enough materials to supply a connected history of the Church. Such a procedure of remaining strictly within the confines of original documents always includes the hazard of occasionally sketchy explanation due to insufficient evidence, but Shea tried to meet that problem by collecting more and more material.37

This thesis has sought to align John Gilmary Shea more closely with the collectors of his time. But more than that, it has put forward that Shea did not only produce a body of knowledge based on years of research and writing, he also contributed knowledge through his collecting. In other words, his publications and his library did similar things. John Gilmary Shea wanted nothing more than to see his library “in some Catholic institution where it would be preserved and increased.” 38 The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) has stated that in this day of collective collections, what will make one library different from another are their unique specialized collections: “Special Collections represent not only the heart of an ARL library’s mission, but one of the critical identifiers of a research library.” 39 John Gilmary Shea’s library collection is a critical identifier for the history of Georgetown University Library as well as its continued research mission. Strong collecting efforts persist at Georgetown in the areas of Shea’s main focus: Catholic Americana. Herculean efforts have been made over the

38 John Gilmary Shea to John J. Dougherty, undated, quoted in Guilday, John Gilmary Shea, 134.
past one hundred plus years to ensure that what remains of Shea’s library collection stays together with documented provenance and worldwide access points. “Dr. Shea’s large library was collected for real use,”40 and that use continues every day.

40 Box 52, folder 5, Peter Guilday Papers, ACUA, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.
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