

The Genealogy of a Collection: The Augustean Catalogues in Wolfenbüttel

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Already in the early days of his service as librarian of the ducal library in Wolfenbüttel, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing developed a plan for a publication containing the ‘treasures’ of the library’s collection. In the introduction to the first issue, he explained his intentions to document the great merits of the library, whose books had served scholars for generations. Lessing criticised his predecessors for being interested only in the history of the library’s augmentation, or of the library’s ‘genealogy,’ as he put it.¹ According to the famous writer, the prior librarians had been so focused on the catalogues that they ignored the real purpose of telling the collection’s history: to show how it had contributed to scholarship. Much like some critics today, Lessing found genealogical research too unimaginative.²

Indeed, using book lists as sources to write an institution’s history or a scholarly biography was not a new approach in the eighteenth century.³ The contents of private libraries were considered valuable evidence of the interests of their owners and were hence widely used by authors of *historia literaria*.⁴ Such approaches are still widespread,

¹ GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING, ‘Vorrede,’ *Zur Geschichte und Litteratur: Aus den Schätzen der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Wolfenbüttel* 1 (1773): 4. On Lessing see Hugh Barr Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: His Life, Works, and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

² For example, Dirk Werle criticises library reconstructions that are missing a sophisticated theoretical foundation. See DIRK WERLE, ‘Literaturtheorie als Bibliothekstheorie,’ in *Literaturwissenschaft und Bibliotheken*, eds STEFAN ALKER and ACHIM HÖLTER (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2015), 22. One central aspect of criticism towards the information value of library reconstructions is the differentiation between book ownership, book use, and reading. See for example DANIEL MORNET, ‘Les enseignements des bibliothèques privées (1750–1780),’ *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France* 17 (1910): 449–92, at 451–52.

³ On library catalogues as sources see MALCOLM WALSBY, ‘Book Lists and Their Meaning,’ in *Documenting the Early Modern Book World: Inventories and Catalogues in Manuscript and Print*, eds MALCOLM WALSBY and NATASHA CONSTANTINIDOU (Brill: Leiden, 2013), 1–24; ARCHER TAYLOR, *Book Catalogues: Their Varieties and Uses*, 2nd ed. (Winchester: St. Paul’s Bibliographies, 1986); PAUL RAABE, ‘Bibliothekskataloge als buchgeschichtliche Quellen: Bemerkungen über gedruckte Kataloge öffentlicher Bibliotheken in der frühen Neuzeit,’ *Tradition und Innovation: Studien und Anmerkungen zur Bibliotheksgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2013), 69–89; REINHARD WITTMANN, ‘Bücherkataloge des 16.–18. Jahrhunderts als Quellen der Buchgeschichte. Eine Einführung,’ in *Bücherkataloge als buchgeschichtliche Quellen in der frühen Neuzeit*, REINHARD WITTMANN, ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984), 7–17.

⁴ See for example ZACHARIAS KONRAD VON UFFENBACH, *Merkwürdige Reisen durch Niedersachsen, Holland und Engelland*, 3 vols. (Ulm: Gaum, 1753–54). Among other things, he reports in great detail on the libraries he visited. See also PERTTI VAKKARI, ‘The Roots of Library Science in the Internal and External Discourse of *Historia Literaria* in Germany,’ *Bibliothek Forschung und Praxis* 18, no. 1 (1994): 68–76. On

and, mainly owing to digital methods, library reconstructions have experienced a real boom in recent years.⁵ These days, historians and literary scholars are more interested than ever in book ownership as they try to discover the focal points of collections and deduce the scholarly or intellectual ambitions of private libraries.⁶ The observation that especially systematic catalogues reflect ‘how men understood and organised the world in which they lived’ has become a topos;⁷ thereby intellectual historians analyse the dissemination of ideas.⁸ In some cases, catalogues are used to retrace international relations, book circulation, and knowledge transfer; other studies compare ‘inventories of knowledge.’⁹ Especially in the context of the nobility, research has been carried out on the question of book ownership and representation.¹⁰ Scholars have conducted studies on reading behaviour and the role of books in households, often with a focus

historia litteraria in general see FRANK GRUNERT and FRIEDRICH VOLLHARDT, eds, *Historia litteraria. Neuordnungen des Wissens im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Akad.-Verlag, 2007); PAUL NELLES, ‘Historia litteraria and Morhof: Private Teaching and Professorial Libraries at the University of Kiel,’ in *Mapping the World of Learning: The Polyhistor of Daniel Georg Morhof*, ed. FRANÇOISE WAQUET (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 31–56.

⁵ A variety of digital library reconstructions have been created in the context of the MARBACH WEIMAR Wolfenbüttel research association. Accessed August 27, 2020, <http://bibliotheksrekonstruktion.hab.de/>. See also, for example, STEFAN HÖPPNER and ULRIKE TRENKMANN, ‘Goethe Bibliothek Online. Ein digitaler Katalog,’ *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 134 (2017): 237–52.

⁶ MICHAEL KNOCH, ed., *Autorenbibliotheken: Erschließung, Rekonstruktion, Wissensordnung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015); STEFAN HÖPPNER, CAROLINE JESSEN, JÖRN MÜNKNER, and ULRIKE TRENKMANN, eds, *Autorschaft und Bibliothek: Sammlungsstrategien und Schreibverfahren* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2018).

⁷ TAYLOR, *Book Catalogues*, 154. On library classifications see also: HELWI BLOM, ‘Philosophie ou Commerce? L’évolution des systèmes de classement bibliographique dans les catalogues de bibliothèques privées publiés en France au XVIII^e siècle,’ *Les bibliothèques et l’économie des connaissances / Bibliotheken und die Ökonomie des Wissens 1450–1850*, eds FRÉDÉRIC BARBIER, ISTVÁN MONOK, and ANDREA SEIDLER (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtár és Információs Központ, 2020), 203–34.

⁸ In this context see for example the project *Measuring Enlightenment. Disseminating Ideas, Authors and Texts in Europe (1665–1830)*. Accessed August 27, 2020, <http://mediate18.nl>.

⁹ See for example the Cambridge/Granada-based project *The Bibliotheca Hernandina and the Early Modern Book World. Towards a New Cartography of Knowledge* and forthcoming publication: EDWARD WILSON-LEE and JOSÉ MARÍA PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ, *Hernando Colón's New World of Books: Towards a Cartography of Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021). See also ALESSA JOHNS, ‘The Book as Cosmopolitan Object: Women’s Publishing, Collecting and Anglo-German Exchange,’ in *Women and Material Culture*, eds JENNIE BATCHELOR and CORA KAPLAN (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 176–91; ULRIKE GLEIXNER, ‘Weltensammlerin. Kultureller Transfer in fürstlichen Privatbibliotheken: Herzogin Antoinette Amalie von Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1696–1762),’ in *Frauen-Bücher-Höfe: Wissen und Sammeln vor 1800. Women-Books-Courts: Knowledge and Collecting before 1800. Essays in Honor of Jill Bepler*, eds VOLKER BAUER, ELIZABETH HARDING, GERHILD SCHOLZ WILLIAMS, and MARA R. WADE (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018), 79–91; FRANZ M. EYBL, ‘Nordböhmische Spurensuche: was ein Bibliothekskatalog über barocke Textzirkulation erzählt,’ in *Kommunikation und Information im 18. Jahrhundert: Das Beispiel der Habsburgermonarchie*, eds JOHANNES FRIMMEL and MICHAEL WÖRGERBAUER (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 101–18.

¹⁰ For example: LISA SKOGH, ‘Dynastic Representation: A Book Collection of Queen Hedwig Eleonora (1636–1715) and Her Role as a Patron of the Arts,’ *Konsthistorisk tidskrift / Art History Journal* 80, no. 2 (2011): 108–23; CLAUDIA BRINKER-VON DER HEYDE and JÜRGEN WOLF, eds, *Repräsentation, Wissen, Öffentlichkeit. Bibliotheken zwischen Barock und Aufklärung* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2011); PAUL RAABE, *Leserleben. Geschichten von Fürsten, Sammlern, Gelehrten und anderen Lesern* (Zurich, Hamburg: Arche, 1982).

on gender-specific uses.¹¹ Moreover, manuscript catalogues can be valuable repositories for the reconstruction of book production in the context of the history of printing, as they sometimes mention obscure books that would otherwise be lost. They retrace the book knowledge of a specific time.¹² Initiatives like the *Union Catalogue of Books Printed in German Speaking Countries in the 17th Century* or the *English Short Title Catalogue* can benefit significantly from the book knowledge that is preserved by these early library documents. They hence serve mostly as ‘primary sources of bibliographical information’¹³ and are widely revered for their function as reference works.

Studies which consider catalogues as a medium beyond their function as a documentary list are rare.¹⁴ Catalogues, their texts, and their physical properties tell stories that range far beyond simple book ownership as they invite researchers to explore the relationship between objects, collections, and collectors. Catalogues thus hold much more information than what is commonly assumed. Looking less at the actual contents of the lists, while considering their materiality as well as their mediality, opens up new observational dimensions: a catalogue coordinates a specific kind of communication between itself and the reader, but also between its different users. Shelfmarks, for example, tell users where to look for a book. They guide them to a specific place in a room; they are an instruction for action. Furthermore, the function of a catalogue reveals a lot about the way it wants to construct meaning. Does it want to convey the totality of a collection? Does it emphasise particular aspects? The materiality of a catalogue – its size, its weight, the quality of the paper – tells a lot about how it is supposed to be used; the object shapes the way the user interacts with it. When looking at the catalogue’s text, we may ask what narrative it wants to develop. How does it communicate information, and is it universally valid or does the information change over time? Finally, we always have to consider catalogues part of

¹¹ See for example: HELWI BLOM, RINDERT JAGERSMA, and JULIETTE REBOUL, ‘Printed Private Library Catalogues as a Source for the History of Reading,’ *Edinburgh History of Reading*, ed. MARY HAMMOND, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020); JENNIFER ANDERSEN and ELIZABETH SAUER, eds, *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); HEIDI BRAYMAN HACKEL, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); JILL BEPLER, ‘Die fürstliche Witwe als Büchersammlerin: Spuren weiblicher Lektüre in der Frühen Neuzeit,’ in *Der wissenschaftliche Bibliothekar: Festschrift für Werner Arnold*, eds DETLEV HELLFAIER, HELWIG SCHMIDT-GLINTZER, and WOLFGANG SCHMITZ (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 19–40; JILL BEPLER, ‘Die Lektüre der Fürstin. Die Rolle von Inventaren für die Erforschung von Fürstinnenbibliotheken in der Frühen Neuzeit,’ in *Sammeln, Lesen, Übersetzen als höfische Praxis der Frühen Neuzeit. Die böhmische Bibliothek der Fürsten Eggenberg im Kontext der Fürsten- und Fürstinnenbibliotheken der Zeit*, eds JILL BEPLER and HELGA MEISE (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 201–27; ULRIKE GLEIXNER, ‘Die lesende Fürstin. Büchersammeln als lebenslange Bildungspraxis,’ in *Vormoderne Bildungsgänge. Selbst- und Fremdbeschreibungen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds JULIANE JACOBI, JEAN-LUX LE CAM, and HANS-ULRICH MUSOLFF (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 207–24.

¹² See for example FLAVIA BRUNI and ANDREW PETTEGREE, eds, *Lost Books. Reconstructing the Print World of Pre-Industrial Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); TAYLOR, *Book Catalogues*.

¹³ TAYLOR, *Book Catalogues*, ix.

¹⁴ For examples on the mediality and materiality of lists in general see JESSICA KEATING and LIA MARKEY, ‘Introduction. Captured Objects: Inventories of Early Modern Collections,’ *Journal of the History of Collections* 23 (2011): 209–13; JAMES DELBURGO and STAFFAN MÜLLER-WILLE, ‘Introduction, Focus: Listmania,’ *Isis* 103, no. 4 (2012): 710–15.

a more extensive communication network that only works because of the familiar patterns used. Each catalogue is hence integrated into a series, with precursors and successors referring to the past and pointing towards the future.

Enhanced Genealogy

Although Lessing's critical perspective may be shared, he greatly underestimated the potential of catalogues as historical sources. The same can be said for his assessment of the value of 'genealogy' as a historical discipline. In recent years the concept of object biographies¹⁵ has also been applied to books.¹⁶ Every book has its life: it changes meaning and value, it creates social interactions and relations between other objects and people. Library catalogues should be considered a critical component of a book's biography: they document a particular time of the book's life and establish relations between different objects. By codifying these relations, they create a 'book family' on paper whose genealogy can be traced through the medium. Such a genealogy goes far beyond what Lessing had in mind when he criticised his predecessors' work and can best be described with Foucault's words: 'genealogy does not oppose itself to history [...] on the contrary, it rejects the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search of "origins".'¹⁷ According to Foucault, who refers to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*,¹⁸ genealogy aims to record 'the singularity of events outside any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history.'¹⁹ It meticulously dissects how events have different meanings and engage in divergent roles at different times. Genealogy is hence not about finding an immutable identity of things; it is about things that are fundamentally disparate and which are only brought together through specific circumstances at a specific time.²⁰ If we apply such a genealogical method to book collections, it means that we do not necessarily consider single copies and their origins. Instead, we analyse the ever-changing book family as a whole that is never a static, immobile manifestation of cultural interests. The genealogy of a collection examines developments; it studies 'numberless beginnings whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by a historical eye.'²¹ The (supposed) unity of a collection can then be seen as a result of coincidence, as 'it shows the heterogeneity of what was

¹⁵ See IGOR KRYPTOFF, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commodization as Process,' in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. ARJUN APPADURAI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91.

¹⁶ ULRIKE GLEIXNER, CONSTANZE BAUM, JÖRN MÜNKNER, and HOLE RÖBLER, eds, *Biographien des Buches* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017).

¹⁷ MICHEL FOUCAULT, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,' in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. DONALD F. BOUCHARD, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 139–64, at 140.

¹⁸ See the newest edition: FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Robert C. Holub, trans. Michael A. Scarpitti (London: Penguin Classics, 2013).

¹⁹ FOUCAULT, 'Nietzsche,' 139.

²⁰ FOUCAULT, 'Nietzsche,' 142.

²¹ FOUCAULT, 'Nietzsche,' 146

imagined consistent with itself.²² Catalogues are essential sources for such a genealogical method. To trace their history is to trace a collection's history.

In the case of the Herzog Augustus Bibliothek (HAB), former library of the ducal family of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and one of today's most prestigious research libraries for medieval and early modern studies, the catalogues provide us with a new perspective on the present-day collection. The many manuscript book lists in the library's archives are witnesses of the numerous individual book collections that found their way into the holdings over the years. Even though today's holdings may be perceived as an entity, they are actually a conglomerate of private princely libraries, scholarly book collections, and former university libraries. Even though the library's history has been well documented since its foundation in 1572,²³ the majority of these catalogues are widely understudied, with the exception of the famous *Bücherradkatalog* (bookwheel catalogue) which has been researched extensively.²⁴ Still, all of them hold the potential for new discoveries beyond retelling the library's history as one of linear growth. By not looking at the documents as book lists, the catalogues tell a story of their own: they can be read as ego-documents, behavioural guidelines, instruments for representation, witnesses of scholarly practices, or legal papers. Just like literary documents, they invite us to read between the lines, to analyse their specific style and their reception as well as to discover their different communicative strategies and hidden messages. The catalogues themselves are hence much more than just lists, more than just the documentation of the collection's content: altogether, they are knowledge stores for the cultural practice we call collecting.

Looking at the various catalogues of the *Bibliotheca Augusta* that were produced between 1611 and the eighteenth century and which document the collection of Duke Augustus of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel,²⁵ we can see the genealogy of a collection that, over time, not only changed contents but also meaning.

²² FOUCAULT, 'Nietzsche,' 147.

²³ HERMANN CONRING, *De Bibliotheca Augusta* (Helmstedt: Müller, 1661); OTTO VON HEINEMANN, *Die Herzogliche Bibliothek zu Wolfenbüttel*, 2nd ed. (Wolfenbüttel: Zwissler, 1894); MECHTHILD RAABE, *Leser und Lektüre vom 17. zum 19. Jahrhundert: die Ausleibbücher der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel 1664–1806*, 8 vols. (Munich: Saur, 1989–98). A new library history is currently being prepared for 2022 in the context of the HAB's 450th anniversary.

²⁴ MARIA VON KATTE, 'Herzog August und die Kataloge seiner Bibliothek,' *Wolfenbütteler Beiträge* 1 (1972): 168–199; ULRICH JOHANNES SCHNEIDER, 'Der Ort der Bücher in der Bibliothek und im Katalog am Beispiel von Herzog Augusts Wolfenbütteler Büchersammlung,' *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 59 (2005): 93–106; ALEXANDER NEBRIG, 'Der Katalog als literaturkritisches Werk. Die "libri ethici" im Bücherradkatalog Augusts des Jüngeren,' in *Autorschaft und Bibliothek*, eds HÖPPNER et al., 171–84.

²⁵ Augustus the Younger (1579–1666), Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg and Prince of Wolfenbüttel as of 1635, book collector and founder of today's HAB, which in the seventeenth century was the largest book collection north of the Alps. PAUL RAABE, ed., *Sammler Fürst Gelehrter – Herzog August zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg 1579–1666* (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1979); MARESA WILL and JILL BEPLER, eds, *Der Bücherfürst des 17. Jahrhunderts. Herzog August der Jüngere* (Heidelberg: Burkert & Müller, 2004).

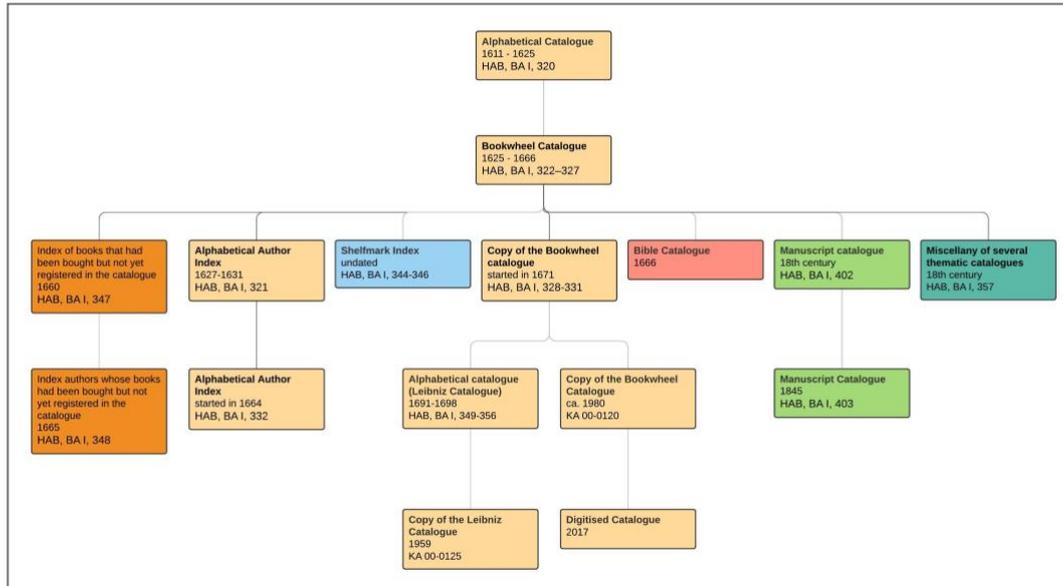


Figure 1. The Augustean manuscript catalogues and indices.

The Books Become a Family

Starting from a young age, and during his travels around Europe, Augustus bought a substantial number of books. The first preserved written record we have is a catalogue kept at the HAB's library archives, produced between 1611 and 1625 by Duke Augustus himself.²⁶ It can be presumed that the document is the start of the codification of the collection. The small folio volume lists a total of 6,245 books which build the foundation for what was later labelled the 'Bibliotheca Augusta.' As Maria von Katte points out, the catalogue contains only one edition of each work, revealing specific interests in diverse topics.²⁷ Later, Augustus collected multiple versions of the same oeuvre, making him more of a bibliophile treasure hunter.

Initially, the catalogue is organised alphabetically, starting with the author's last name and listing the book's place of publication, printer, and size. Considering that it makes no mention of each book's location, we can assume that it was used primarily as a personal reference work by the Duke, who added cross-references to other books or comments on the condition of a book. However, the catalogue does not end with the letter Z. After running out of space, Augustus simply added books as he bought them, with a lot less accuracy, documenting a rapid growth which caught him unprepared. Aware of the impossibility of keeping pace with the library's evolution, Augustus apparently planned to readjust the alphabetical system. The last page of the catalogue gives an insight into the Duke's new plans on how to continue the indexing: while sticking to the alphabetical order, he created subcategories according to the

²⁶ HERZOG AUGUST, *Alphabetischer Katalog*, BA I, 320, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, DE (HAB henceforth).

²⁷ KATTE, 'Herzog August,' 171.

principle Aa, Ab, Ac, etc. One catalogue volume was to contain 200 entries of one category. After that, Augustus would simply start a new volume for the same category. Theoretically, this system could have carried on indefinitely, but it did not solve the problem of finding a book's exact location. At a certain point, Augustus must have realised that he was becoming a serious book collector and that he needed to change the system altogether.

Growing and Prospering

For his second catalogue, Augustus hence rethought his concept of alphabetical order and started developing a thematic classification for the so-called *Bücherradkatalog*.²⁸ But just like the first catalogue, the final product had a very revealing hybrid design. Augustus himself wrote most parts of the six volumes produced between 1625 and 1665.²⁹ The ponderous folios, which each weigh around ten kilograms, are bound in Morocco leather and count a total of 7,200 pages. The Duke put the folios on a specially made bookwheel, not only allowing him to switch between catalogues easily but also bearing witness to the sophisticated cataloguing and cross-referencing practices that Augustus had already developed for his library.³⁰ Unlike the first catalogue, which was smaller in size and potentially intended to accompany the Duke on his travels, the new catalogues were intended to stay in their dedicated place.

Whereas the first two volumes serve as a systematic inventory of the Duke's existing collection, the following volumes only list 'libri varii' and document the continuous accessions. In the same way as the alphabetical order, the spectacular growth of the library overstrained the systematic approach. The records are thus evidence of the absolutely unmanageable task that the collection was becoming and allow us to observe work in progress that went on for 40 years. For the two systematic volumes, Augustus came up with classifications, or what he called the 'ordo materiaram.' Nevertheless, we can observe once again how he reshaped his concept over time. The first draft of the categories can be found in the initial alphabetical catalogue. When finally moving his library to a new building in 1625, Augustus must have reconsidered his system and made some changes which he documented in the bookwheel catalogue, establishing a new order of 20 thematic groups for his library.³¹ It shows how he engaged with the books on a theoretical and bibliographical level and that it was important to him to keep a record of his thoughts. Categorising was a conscious choice and a way for Augustus to make sense of his collection.³² In the typical manner of the time, Augustus established clear hierarchies, starting with

²⁸ HERZOG AUGUST, *Bücherradkatalog* (6 Bde), BA I, 322–27, HAB.

²⁹ Parts of volume 6 were only completed as late as 1719, see KATTE, 'Herzog August,' 177.

³⁰ On the bookwheel see MARTIN BOGHARDT, 'Das Wolfenbütteler Bücherrad,' in *Herzog-August-Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel*, ed. PAUL RAABE (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1978), 58–60. On the invention of the bookwheel see JOHN CONSIDINE, 'The Ramellian Bookwheel,' *Erudition and the Republic of Letters* 1 (2016): 381–411.

³¹ For a comparison of the categories see KATTE, 'Herzog August,' 175.

³² On the problem of headings in library classifications see ANN BLAIR, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 92f.

theology and law, and ending with the so-called ‘Quodlibetica’ and manuscripts. Whereas other manuscript indices at the HAB note the exact location of a book, indicating for example the number of the bookcase and the specific shelf, Augustus simply chose consecutive numbers as shelfmarks.³³ This is a sign of the mobility of the books and the flexibility of the system, but it also shows that the catalogues were not intended to serve as a guide for the library. Augustus simply copied the text of the title pages of the books and sometimes added comments. According to Ulrich Johannes Schneider, the catalogue must thus be considered an intellectual work which was used as a personal ‘memory aid.’³⁴

To go even further, it can be argued that the catalogues should actually be read as a self-testimony, giving an insight into the Duke’s everyday life and his engagement with his collection. Augustus carefully dated every new section that he started, beginning with the ‘libri theologici’ in folio, counting 80 pages, on February 25, 1625. The ‘theologici in quarto’ section was started two months later on April 21. Based on these indications, Maria von Katte estimated a daily workload of nearly two pages with an average of 15 entries per page.³⁵ The Duke hence worked very regularly, filling a total of around 4,000 pages all by himself. The dates are a manifestation of a strong self-awareness and that the library was at the centre of the Duke’s everyday life. What is more, we can trace some periods when the Duke had other priorities. According to Katte, this is especially noticeable for the years 1635 to 1637 as well as 1643 to 1646.³⁶ These dates correspond to when Augustus’s court moved from Hitzacker to Brunswick and finally to Wolfenbüttel. These were stressful times for the new Prince of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, who first had to deal with a struggle for succession and was later occupied with the reconstruction of the destroyed residence in Wolfenbüttel.³⁷

Another hint that the catalogue was mainly intended for personal use are the marginalia that the Duke added to the titles and which were either cross-references to other works or additional information. In some cases, they can even be understood as short excerpts which summed up the essential topics of a work. These notes were complex private memory aids, intended to guide individual thought processes.³⁸ Some details of the catalogue seem to give private insights: looking almost like a random doodle, just alongside the table of contents of the catalogue, Duke Augustus added the words ‘Animi medica officina’ – loosely translating as ‘the pharmacy of the mind.’

³³ See for example the manuscript catalogue of Philippine Charlotte, Duchess of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, which indicates specific shelfmarks for the position of each book. Systematischer Katalog der Handbibliothek der Herzogin Philippine Charlotte (1754), BA I, 641, HAB.

³⁴ He uses the term ‘Gedächtnisprotokoll.’ SCHNEIDER, ‘Der Ort der Bücher,’ 104.

³⁵ KATTE, ‘Herzog August,’ 179.

³⁶ KATTE, ‘Herzog August,’ 184.

³⁷ See HEINEMANN, *Herzogliche Bibliothek*, 54–61.

³⁸ On the many practices for handling knowledge and information overload in general see: BLAIR, *Too Much to Know*; HELMUT ZEDELMAIER, *Werkstätten des Wissens zwischen Renaissance und Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); ANTHONY GRAFTON, *Inky Fingers: The Making of Books in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020).

Augustus also emphasises the initial letters of each word, spelling out AMO – I love. Considering that the catalogue was originally not intended for public use, we can consider this a manifestation of personal sentiment. By adding these words, Augustus consciously refers to the ancient library of Thebes which allegedly had an identical inscription in its entrance. Justus Lipsius, famous philologist and humanist, includes this detail in his *De Bibliothecis Syntagma*, a text which is not only a history of antique libraries but also decidedly sets an exemplum for the actions of princes.³⁹ Considering the fact that Augustus owned a few editions of the book, it seems very likely that he had read this text and considered his library a legitimate successor of an antique tradition.⁴⁰ The catalogue is thus not only a database or memory aid, but also a guideline on how to act which the Duke addressed to himself.

A Collection at Its Peak

As a collection grows, it becomes more and more challenging to manage. In our case, this development is proven by the many ‘side catalogues’ that were produced alongside the bookwheel catalogue. First of all, there are two separate volumes: one lists books that had been bought but were not yet registered in the catalogue;⁴¹ the second lists authors whose books were in the Duke’s possession without figuring in the catalogue.⁴² Here, the Duke encoded the process of appropriation. Both volumes show how the rapid growth of the library surpassed the capacities of the Duke and his librarians. The sophisticated practice of cataloguing was complicated as well as time-consuming, and any inaccuracies would make the catalogue unserviceable. The two lists were hence produced as makeshifts, interim solutions to handle the ‘copia librorum.’ What is more, they indicate the Duke’s fear of information loss. Once a book was physically integrated into the library, it could not be traced unless it was recorded in at least one of the catalogues, which became essential tools of knowledge management.

Other side catalogues were intended for communication with third-party users and provided a pragmatic exchange of information. Mostly, they were designed to give the users guidance and orientation. This was especially important to scholars who wanted to utilise the books and manuscripts for their own work.⁴³ The existence of these catalogues attests to the obscurity of the bookwheel catalogue as, by adopting more common forms of indexing, they acted as universally comprehensible translators. The most important auxiliary material of the Augusta are two alphabetical author

³⁹ See DIRK WERLE, *Copia librorum. Problemgeschichte imaginerter Bibliotheken 1580-1630* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2007), 312.

⁴⁰ See THOMAS STÄCKER, ed., *Lipsius' De Bibliothecis Syntagma. Editiones Electronicae Guelpherbytae*, 17 (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 2017). Accessed November 2, 2020. <http://diglib.hab.de/edoc/ed000001/start.htm>.

⁴¹ HERZOG AUGUST, Verzeichnis angeschaffter Bücher, die noch nicht in den Katalog eingetragen sind, BA I, 347, HAB.

⁴² HERZOG AUGUST, Verzeichnis der Autoren, deren Bücher gekauft, aber noch nicht in den Katalog eingetragen sind, BA I, 348, HAB.

⁴³ On Duke Augustus’ contact with scholars see HEINEMANN, *Herzogliche Bibliothek*, 65–71. See also THOMAS STÄCKER, ‘Der Gelehrte der frühen Neuzeit als Nutzer in der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Wolfenbüttel,’ *Wolfenbütteler Notizen zur Buchgeschichte* 34 (2009): 3–25.

indices which refer to the entries in the *Bücherradkatalog*. The first one was written between 1627 and 1631;⁴⁴ the other one was created by the Duke's librarians from 1664 onwards and is a revised version of the first.⁴⁵ Both indices were probably not used by the Duke himself – he knew his library well enough – but were produced with future users in mind. They were only finished after his death.

One aspect which has not been mentioned so far but which applies to a variety of catalogues is the legal dimension of a list. In his testament, Augustus specified that the collection was not to be sold and had to remain, whole, in Wolfenbüttel.⁴⁶ His catalogues were meant to document the books as an entity, making sure that his legacy would stand the test of time. Today's HAB is the living proof of the strategy's efficiency.

A Collection Without Its Collector

After the death of Augustus, his son and successor Rudolph Augustus did not show great interest in the collection his father had built over 60 years. Instead, he focused on his own acquisitions⁴⁷ and only employed two librarians to take care of the Wolfenbüttel holdings. Over the coming years, the collection was relatively neglected: almost no acquisitions were made; the librarians spent most of their time completing the bookwheel catalogue with Augustus' acquisitions.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, new side catalogues kept being produced which testify to the long-lasting fascination with this one of a kind library. However, it was not only a fascination with the collection itself; it was also at least as much an acknowledgement of the accomplishment that was the bookwheel catalogue. Some of the newly emerging catalogues were simple copies; others used new exploration techniques.

The aim of these catalogues was threefold. First, they were copied to hand the knowledge down to future generations. Under the direction of David Hanisius,⁴⁹ an exact copy of the bookwheel catalogue was begun that was most likely intended for print. Such a printed version was eagerly awaited by scholars, as it would have greatly simplified lengthy correspondence and research processes.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the

⁴⁴ HERZOG AUGUST, Alphabet. Autorenregister zum Bücherradkatalog, BA I, 321, HAB.

⁴⁵ HERZOG AUGUST, Alphabet. Autorenregister zum Bücherradkatalog, BA I, 332, HAB.

⁴⁶ A copy of Augustus's testament is in Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, VI Hs 8 Nr. 39, Wolfenbüttel, DE. See also HEINEMANN, *Herzogliche Bibliothek*, 78–80.

⁴⁷ On Rudolph Augustus (1627–1704), Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg and Prince of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel from 1666 until his death. JOCHEN BEPLER, 'Rudolf August, Herzog zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg (Wolfenbüttel),' in *Braunschweigisches Biographisches Lexikon*, eds HORST-RÜDIGER JARCK and DIETER LENT (Braunschweig: Appelhans Verlag, 2006), 598.

⁴⁸ RAABE, *Leser und Lektüre*, vol. 1, 27.

⁴⁹ David Hanisius (d. 1681), theologian and librarian. Head librarian in Wolfenbüttel from 1666. See KARL F. OTTO JR., 'Zu David Hanisius, dem unbekanntem Bibliothekar,' *Wolfenbütteler Beiträge. Aus den Schätzen der Herzog August Bibliothek*, ed. PAUL RAABE, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), 283–99.

⁵⁰ Already in 1661, in a printed letter addressed to Johann Christian von Boineburg, Hermann Conring mentions the demand for a printed catalogue. It would be of great use to the whole 'respublica literaria.' Conring sees it as a 'sin' to assemble so many books without making use of them. See CONRING, *De*

polyhistor Hermann Conring (1606–81) mentioned already in 1661 another reason for the publication of the catalogue: to keep the memory of Duke Augustus' efforts alive.⁵¹ However, after ten years, the endeavour was probably aborted – the volumes that are still preserved in the archive stop abruptly at page 4,348.⁵² As Conring correctly observed, printing the catalogue would have been a costly endeavour, taking many years.⁵³ In the end, the catalogue was simply too big and the plan was never realised. Secondly, librarians soon started to prepare specialised catalogues. A bible catalogue was begun as soon as 1666,⁵⁴ and there are several lists of the Augustean manuscripts⁵⁵ intended to simplify users' practical requests. Thirdly and most importantly, these new catalogues were produced to optimise the use of the library. A curious and unfortunately undated list that was produced in order to simplify the use of the library was a three-volume shelfmark index that documented the exact position of the books.⁵⁶ In combination with the bookwheel catalogue, it acted as a map of the library room. The finding aid hence created its own reality by establishing a fixed relation between a title and a particular place. It reveals how the library was used and how its owner wanted to direct users through it. The volume is bound using reused paper on which slim strips of paper were glued.⁵⁷ These strips only list the serial shelfmarks; horizontal line breaks probably indicated that the user had to look on the next shelf. The design indicates that expansion was anticipated, as the single strips could easily be replaced. What is more, there are several added remarks, for example 'oben aufgelegt' ('put on top') which indicates that a book with a specific number was put on top of the shelf rather than integrated into the book line. Spaces that were left for additional books were also indicated. Probably at a later date, someone added shelfmarks in pencil. Although very abstract, the catalogue creates a spatial vision of the collection.⁵⁸

It would seem that a new systematic index, containing several groups – Historici, Poetici, Rhetorici, Quodlibetici, Politici, Numismatici, Antiquarii, Physici,

Bibliotheca Augusta, 6. The historian Caspar Sagittarius encouraged David Hanisius to prepare the print, as it would be of 'great use.' See JAKOB BURCKHARD, *Historia Bibliothecae Augustae Quae Wolfenbütteli Est*, part 3 (Leipzig: Breitkopf 1746), 283.

⁵¹ 'Ea est, quod sola Indicis editione possit aeterna parari memoria operarum illarum ingentium, quae in Bibliothecarum quarumvis admirabilium structuram impensae sunt.' CONRING, *De Bibliotheca Augusta*, 16.

⁵² Unvollendete Abschrift des Bücherradkatalogs (Bd 1-4, bei p. 4348 abgebrochen), BA I, 328–31, HAB.

⁵³ Conring, *De Bibliotheca Augusta*, 36f.

⁵⁴ Katte, 'Herzog August,' 184.

⁵⁵ BA I, 402 and 403, HAB. See also WOLFGANG MILDE, 'Die Erwerbungsjahre der Augusteischen Handschriften der Herzog Augustus Bibliothek. Supplement zum Katalog von Otto von Heinemann "Die Augusteischen Handschriften", Bd. 1–5, Wolfenbüttel 1890–1903,' *Wolfenbütteler Beiträge* 14 (2006): 73–144.

⁵⁶ BA, I, 344–46, HAB. Some of the reused papers are panegyrics printed by Anton Ulrich (1633–1714), son of Augustus. This indicates that the catalogue was probably only produced after Augustus's death.

⁵⁷ On the practice of slips glued into reference works see BLAIR, *Too Much to Know*, 95–99.

⁵⁸ On the interaction of spaces and catalogues see JEANNE PEIFFER and RAYMOND-JOSUÉ SECKEL, 'Der Grundriss der Bibliothek, oder wie der Raum die Konzeption des Kataloges bestimmt,' in *Museum, Bibliothek, Stadtraum: räumliche Wissensordnungen 1600–1900*, eds ROBERT FELFE and KIRSTEN WAGNER (Berlin: Lit, 2010), 77–88.

Bibliothecarii, Grammatici, Geographici, Ethici, and Mathematici – was produced in the eighteenth century.⁵⁹ To be exact, it is a single bound volume assembling several separate catalogues, probably listing books that were acquired after the death of Augustus as most of them are from much later dates, even going well into the 1720s. Nothing is really known about this miscellany. Some of the catalogue titles reveal that the books were arranged in a new order: Numismatici, Antiquarii, Bibliothecarii, and Mathematici are entirely new categories that are not found in the Duke's original system. Another part of this alleged systematic catalogue lists only recent books 'iuxta formarum seriem,' which shows that they were not physically integrated into the rest of the collection. Is it possible to understand the introduction of the categories as an epistemological shift towards disciplinary differentiation? Or was it simply easier to handle the book overload by dividing it into smaller sections? In any case, the Duke's successors must have felt the need for a more sophisticated system, which is why they produced the catalogues. Besides the content, the materiality of the volume is very interesting: at first glance, it reveals itself to be a conglomerate of different documents. The papers used show significant differences, the handwriting changes, the page numbering is not consistent, pages were added, and the binding is obviously from a much later date. The only factor linking this miscellany of lists to Duke Augustus's collection is the fact that it figures in the *Bibliotheca Augusta* section of today's library archive catalogue.⁶⁰ This volume is hence the best example of how catalogues create relations that are perceived as reality: I am not sure of this catalogue's actual connection with the Augustean collection, but considering that the HAB's current catalogue establishes a link between the two, I accept it as a fact.

However, the most significant user improvement must have been the catalogue that Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz started when he became the librarian of the Augusta in 1691.⁶¹ With Augustus's alphabetical index, the bookwheel catalogue was still needed to find the exact location of a book. It was hence a cumbersome process to look up a specific book. Leibniz wanted to simplify the procedure by listing shelfmarks directly in the alphabetical author catalogue, which will have come as a massive relief for the user. Furthermore, he introduced a keyword system for anonymous works which made the older catalogues obsolete. To further simplify its use, page numbers were added with a red stamp at a later date. Leibniz's catalogue must have been received very well and adopted extensively as the many signs of wear show us. Many hands have browsed through the eight volumes. Indeed, current librarians indicate that the catalogue was still in frequent use until the 1980s.⁶² However, in the same way as Augustus's

⁵⁹ HERZOG AUGUST, *Systematischer Katalog der Gruppen: Libri, Historici, Poetici, Rhetorici, Quodlibetici, Politici, Numismatici, Antiquarii, Physici, Bibliothecarii, Grammatici, Geographici, Ethici, Mathematici*, BA I, 357, HAB.

⁶⁰ The catalogue of the HAB's library archive is an internal document and is available on request.

⁶¹ See ULRICH JOHANNES SCHNEIDER, 'Leibniz konvertiert einen Katalog,' in *Frauen-Bücher-Höfe*, eds BAUER et al., 61–77.

⁶² I particularly thank Alexandra Schebesta for this information.

catalogue, the fame of the author might be one of the main reasons for the document's success.

Whatever their purpose, all of these catalogues are joined by the fact that they, in some way or another, try to manufacture a better understanding of the collection. Furthermore, the librarians wanted to retrace the genesis of the collection, hoping to penetrate the core of this structure, which was more or less impervious to outsiders. As well as making it accessible to the public as an exemplum, the printed edition of the bookwheel catalogue, in particular, was also intended to record Augustus's genius.⁶³ Authors of catalogues hence choose what to highlight and what to conceal, and they significantly regulate how a book assemblage is perceived.⁶⁴ This is especially important considering that librarians in the nineteenth century started to take the Augustean collection apart and integrate it into the general holdings. When plans were made to restore the original constellation in the twentieth century, the catalogues became important for its reconstruction. The result is the Augusteerhalle as it can still be seen today.⁶⁵

New Mediality: Manuscript Catalogues in the Digital Age

The librarian Lorenz Hertel drew a final line under the Augustean collection in 1705, when he stopped adding to the bookwheel catalogue and instead started a new list of acquisitions.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the story of the manuscript catalogues of the Augustean collection does not end in the eighteenth century. Even though gradually replaced by other finding aids, the bookwheel catalogue remained an iconic object for the history of the library, which experienced substantial growth in the eighteenth century mainly thanks to the incorporation of other collections.

Together with its predecessor and the many side catalogues, it is now listed in the library archive's catalogue – basically a catalogue of catalogues. It widely influences how the catalogues are perceived and used, and, in a Latourian sense, how they make us act.⁶⁷ In preparation for this essay, for example, the library archive's finding aid was the primary resource that enabled my entrance into the world of the Augustean catalogues. Many of the catalogues I examined were ordered based on the titles the HAB librarians gave them in the twentieth century. The finding aid hence raises expectations, which creates biases that can sometimes be highly misleading.⁶⁸ One example is the above-mentioned, apparently new systematic catalogue that was produced in the eighteenth century and which had never been described in detail

⁶³ See KATTE, 'Herzog August,' 196–98.

⁶⁴ On the question of omitting information see DAVID PEARSON, 'The English Private Library in the Seventeenth Century,' *The Library* 13, no. 4 (2012): 379–99.

⁶⁵ BEYER, 'Mittlere Aufstellung' in the forthcoming *Jubiläumshand*.

⁶⁶ RAABE, *Leser und Lektüre*, vol. 1, 30.

⁶⁷ In his Actor-Network Theory, Bruno Latour sees objects as responsible for creating social interactions in the same way as humans. See BRUNO LATOUR, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁶⁸ On the problem of finding catalogues in present-day library catalogues see BLOM, 'Philosophie ou Commerce?', 210–11.

before. After a closer look, however, it reveals itself to be but a fragment of what the title ‘Systematischer Katalog’ promises.

It is evident that the documents consulted most are still the bookwheel catalogue and the alphabetical catalogue started by Leibniz. A sign of how widely they were used as historical sources is the number of copies that were produced to conserve the originals in the twentieth century.⁶⁹ Another step in that direction was the 2017 restoration of the volumes and their concurrent digitisation. The bookwheel catalogue has remained part of the Wolfenbüttel manuscript database since this transformation of medium, which changes our perception of it significantly. Ironically, the huge books have become hard for primary users to find, as the digital version is now integrated into another catalogue with its own logic.⁷⁰ What is more, the general context of the single volumes and pages is lost. In order to fully understand the digitised page, the user has to possess a certain amount of preliminary knowledge. A digital edition was planned to serve as a finding aid and make the document more accessible, but this goal was only accomplished in part. Only the first volume of the digitised object is easily navigable thanks to a linked table of contents and occasional links to the HAB’s online public access catalogue.⁷¹ Once again, like so many of the initiatives embarked upon, the project was simply too big. Meanwhile, a facsimile of the bookwheel catalogue is on display in the HAB’s permanent exhibition. It has become a central piece of the library’s self-presentation and stands like no other object not just for the institution’s history, but its very identity. The original is locked away in the vault and can only be seen by special permission, which contributes to the document’s gradual mystification.

Conclusion

Typically, the many manuscript catalogues that document the Augustean collection are treated like family portraits: they are considered to document the as-is state of the collection at a specific moment of its existence. What is all too often forgotten is the staging behind these pictures; it gives away much more information than a first glance suggests. In the same way, the catalogues’ information value is not reduced to the supposed reality they mirror. What and how do they want to tell us about the book family they portray?

For the Augustean collection, the catalogues narrate how it changed over time and how it keeps being transformed and repurposed. They are essential sources for all of the collection’s developments, as they accompany the single objects in their biographies and link them to form an ensemble. They also recount the numerous interactions between the collectors, the users, and the objects. Moreover, the catalogues themselves have changed their function during their lives. The

⁶⁹ The copy of the Leibniz catalogue (KA 00-0125) was produced in 1959. For the copy of the bookwheel catalogue (KA 00-0120), no exact date is indicated. According to internal information, it was produced for the opening of the new library spaces at the Zeughaus in 1981.

⁷⁰ HAB Handschriftendatenbank. Online: <http://diglib.hab.de/?db=mss> (accessed November 2, 2020).

⁷¹ The digitised volume is accessible at <http://diglib.hab.de/mss/ba-1-322/start.htm> (accessed November 2, 2020).

Bücherradkatalog is the best example of this: it was and still is a database, but, even in Augustus's time, it was so much more. It has always been evidence of the challenges that came with handling large amounts of data. For Augustus, it became increasingly impossible to document his collection, but indexing was an essential collection practice, linking the collector to his objects. For him, it was a way to handle contingency, which also led to the long-lasting fascination that still lingers today. After the death of the collector, the catalogues thus became a means for the retrospective staging of Augustus's book ownership. They became paper monuments constructed by subsequent generations to glorify the collection. They were also a way for the catalogue authors to inscribe their names in the genealogy of the collection. But first and foremost, the copies of and engagement with the catalogues are a sign of the ongoing quest for coherence which still appears a big challenge today.

On a meta-level, the intensive study of the catalogues has shown how subsequent generations tried to capture the collection's significance. The manuscript documents were regarded as the key to understand the collection, not only because of their pure function as a list but also because of the immediate access to their formation and consequently to Augustus's mind. Librarians and historians saw the catalogues as evidence of the collection's significance.

From today's perspective, we wonder: would the collection have remained so relevant if the catalogues did not exist? The catalogues make us perceive the books as an ensemble, they create the collection and keep on doing so even in cases when the books themselves have long been dispersed. The fact that, in case of the Herzog Augustus library in Wolfenbüttel, the collection can still be admired as an entity in the so-called *Augusteer Halle* is a result of the catalogues' power to convey a fictional presence. It is the best proof of how catalogues create reality.