A New Look at Old Books: The Collection of the Nassau Public Library in the mid-19th Century

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Abstract

Discovery of a hitherto unknown printed catalogue of the collection of the Public Library in Nassau, Bahamas published in 1862 has given library historians a glimpse at the type of books and periodicals available to residents of Nassau during the first decades after emancipation. An analysis of the library’s collection may help to understand the role the library played in the cultural and intellectual life of the Colony and whether it had any influence on the cultural values of 19th century Bahamian society.

Keywords

Libraries; Printed Book Catalogues

Full Text:

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Napoleon required all books from provincial libraries be sent to the national library and expanded the collection through the spoils of war. In 1868 the library was renamed the Imperial National library. For a while in the late 1880s, it was the largest repository of books in the world. Dig Deeper Read Oliver, Bette Wyn (2007). King Gustav Vasa established a vast collection in the 16th century. This Royal library was expanded by a series of kings through the confiscations and war acquisitions. Beginning in 1661, all printers were required to submit two copies of all printed works - one for the archives and one for the library. Much of the library was destroyed by fire in 1697. In 1768 the collection was re-established in the new royal palace. During the 19th century life in Britain was transformed by the Industrial Revolution. At first it caused many problems but in the late 19th century life became more comfortable for ordinary people. Meanwhile Britain became the world's first urban society. In the early 19th century a group of Evangelical Christians called the Clapham Sect were active in politics. They campaigned for an end to slavery and cruel sports. They gained their name because so many of them lived in Clapham. They also banned any new back to backs. The old ones were gradually demolished and replaced over the following decades. In the early 19th century skilled workers usually lived in 'through houses' i.e. ones that were not joined to the backs of other houses. Built in the 19th century, this gorgeous room is home to over 350,000 works — and the largest collection of Portuguese works outside of Portugal. The library is known for its Neo-Manueline design, which "evokes the Gothic-Renaissance style that flourished during the time of the Portuguese Discoveries," according to My Modern Met. The room is completely covered in books, many of them rare works dating back to the 16th century. The New York Public Library has nearly 53 million items, and is the third-largest library in the world. The incredible Beaux-Arts landmark was one of the largest marble structures in the US when it was built. The Rose Main Reading Room of the library stretches nearly two city blocks.