Oates

Cambridge University Library

A History: From the Beginnings to the Copyright Act of Queen Anne

Of all the departments in the University of Cambridge, the University Library is by far the oldest. Oates traces its evolution in its first three and a half centuries, from its hesitant beginnings to its designation as a place of copyright deposit in the legislation of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. He pays special attention to benefactors, on whom the Library was almost entirely dependent during the Reformation, but also to its subsequent recovery and dramatic expansion in the seventeenth century. The Anglo-Saxon manuscripts given by Archbishop Matthew Parker in 1574 and the sixth-century Codex Bezae, given in 1581, are among the university's most celebrated possessions; but the author devotes no less space to those who encouraged such gifts, to other collections (some exotic and some, such as Richard Holdsworth's library, enormous) and to the prolonged negotiations that frequently preceded their arrival at Cambridge. This is the first of a two-volume history of the Library. The second, by David McKitterick, deals with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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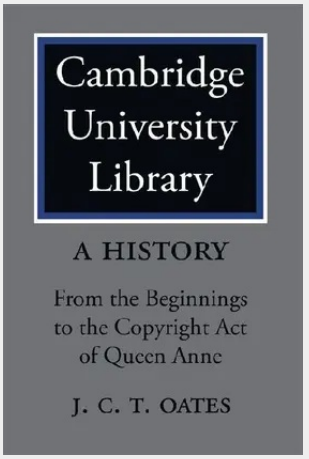

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