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Unpacking the Personal Library

The Public and Private Life of Books

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Unpacking the Personal Library: The Public and Private Life of Books is an edited collection of essays that ponders the cultural meaning and significance of private book collections in relation to public libraries. Contributors explore libraries at particular moments in their history across a wide range of cases, and includes Alberto Manguel's account of the Library of Alexandria as well as chapters on library collecting in the middle ages, the libraries of prime ministers and foreign embassies, protest libraries and the slow transformation of university libraries, and the stories of the personal libraries of Virginia Woolf, Robert Duncan, Sheila Watson, Al Purdy and others. The book shows how the history of the library is really a history of collection, consolidation, migration, dispersal, and integration, where each story negotiates private and public spaces.Unpacking the Personal Library builds on and interrogates theories and approaches from library and archive studies, the history of the book, reading, authorship and publishing. Collectively, the chapters articulate a critical poetics of the personal library within its extended social, aesthetic and cultural contexts.



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