CILIP Rare Books & Special Collections Group Newsletter

Editors' Notes:

Welcome to Issue 128 of CILIP's Rare Books and Special Collections Group Newsletter!

In this issue, we're focusing on all things cataloguing, from zines to plants via methodologies, with a quick pit stop in Paris thanks to Katherine's manuscript-based getaway! We also share some questions and updates from the Committee, offering more ways for you to get involved.

This is our first themed newsletter; in the spring of 2026, we want to share your thoughts, activities and ideas around AI, with a particular focus on inclusivity. Whatever you're up to, we'd love to hear from you around aspects of this theme.

If you would like to submit an idea, please let us know by the end of January 2026 for a 15th February submission date.

Finally, in the autumn we look forward to joining you at the annual RBSCG conference which will be taking place online and accessible worldwide. Our next issue will share some insights from the three half-day event, considering Standards, Systems and the Discoverability of Special Collections.

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Month of June from *Très Riches Heures*. Chantilly, Bibliothèque du musée Condé, ms 65, fol. 6v.

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News from the Committee

Join the Bibliographic Standards Committee!

Are you fascinated by metadata and enthusiastic about rare materials? If so, you might be just the person we are looking for to join the Bibliographic Standards Committee (BSC).

The BSC is part of RBSCG and serves as the CILIP representative for the sector for bibliographic description, provides a central forum for special collections technical processing and reviews international standards. The BSC also shares information with special collections professionals, and advocates for their needs.

The BSC is seeking two new members at any career stage who have an interest in and enthusiasm for rare materials cataloguing and a willingness to devote time to committee work. In particular, the BSC is seeking a liaison to the American Library Association's RBMS Bibliographic Standards committee, which requires attending online meetings outside of UK business hours (normally between 7-9pm UK time).

If you are interested, or would like any more information about the vacancies or the committee, please email Christine Megowan, Chair of the BSC at cmegowan@gmail.com.

You can find more information about BSC, including its terms of reference, on the RBSCG website.

The Directory of Rare Books

2026 marks the 10th anniversary of the 3rd edition of the *Directory of Rare Book and Special Collections in the UK and Republic of Ireland*, edited by Karen Attar (Facet Publishing; 2016). To mark this anniversary, and to consider the future of this significant work, the Committee would like to hear from you. How do you use the *Directory* now, and how have you used it in the past? What do you find most helpful about it, and are there any other sources of information you use in the increasingly digital age? Whether it's for collections practice work or research, we would love to hear what you use the *Directory* for. Contact the editors, or the RBSCG Secretary Alex Kither at ak155@soas.ac.uk to let us know.

Cataloguer's Corner

If you have a cataloguing query, conundrum, or mystery that you would like to share or seek advice about, please consider submitting it for Cataloguer's Corner! Email your ideas or entries to Christine Megowan at cmegowan@gmail.com.

Share with us on Socials

Did you know that RBSCG are on Instagram and Bluesky @ciliprarebooks? We're looking to share more content from our members with our growing audience online, the more visual the better! If you'd like to share anything with us (to share again), contact Chloe Carson-Ashurst, our Social Media Officer, via email at chloe.carson-ashurst@nationalgallery.org.uk or directly via the handles above.

2025 Conference

The 2025 Conference this year will take as its theme Systems, Standards and the Discoverability of Special Collections and bookings will open very soon. In fact, by the time you read this, they may even be open – keep an eye on the usual email lists or have a look at the RBSCG website (https://www.cilip.org.uk/members/group_content_view.asp?group=201312&id=823164). The conference will take place online, 3-5 September, with each day's sessions starting at 2pm. Responding to feedback from previous online events, particularly regarding screen-fatigue and distractions, we've kept the programme focused.

The first session of the conference will look at new approaches, whether that's adapting standards to meet local requirements or embracing new methods to enhance discoverability. We'll also start the discussion about the use of AI for the creation of metadata. Inclusivity will be the theme of our second session. Papers will cover sensitivity in literary archives as well as cataloguing standards and the challenge of representation. The afternoon will also investigate the creation of inclusive library catalogues. Our third session will consider the changing landscape of metadata creation and use. We will hear about the role of JISC in metadata transformation and aggregation as well as RBMS Standards. AI once again appears on the programme with presentations on new initiatives but also a consideration of responsible use in cultural heritage.

Tickets for the conference will cost £10 for all three sessions. There will also be a free unwaged/low salary option. Delegates should choose whichever category they prefer.

We look forward to you joining us in September.

Rich Wragg, Conference Coordinator

Collecting and cataloguing fanzines: Voice of the Fans

In early 2023, Leeds Libraries (LL) and the British Library (BL) began working on a collaborative exhibition celebrating the 'voice' of football fans, specifically (but not exclusively) centred on football fanzines (sometimes styled simply as 'zines') and other aspects of do-it-yourself (D.I.Y.) fan culture. The exhibition launched on May 9 and is currently running at Leeds Central Library (LCL) until August 10, 2025. Over 80 items can be seen, some on public display for the first time – including the earliest known UK football fanzine.

Each of the exhibition themes looks at a different aspect of fanzines and their evolution from the 1970s onwards: the importance of independent media for fan expression; the many creative ways football fans have expressed themselves; how fanzines and other media allow football fans to express solidarity and community on behalf of or alongside marginalised communities; the platform that fanzines provided for fans to challenge the actions of authorities (the Football Association, the police, club owners, etc); the sheer creativity of zines; and the world of fan culture today and in the future.

As this was thought to be the first large-scale exhibition dedicated to exploring this subculture, the curatorial team (split equally between the BL and LL) felt it was necessary to exhibit a wide range of fanzines in each section to fully illustrate and illuminate those themes – it was hoped to include zines from the very earliest days of DIY football fan culture through to the most cutting-edge publications of the modern era.

In short, many fanzines were required to make *Voice of the Fans* work – both for final inclusion in the exhibition itself, but also for the background research that sits behind all major exhibitions and is only ever fractionally glimpsed by attendees.

Voices of the Fans runs from May to August at Leeds Central Library.

Collecting and cataloguing fanzines: Voice of the Fans

Fanzine holdings at Leeds Central Library: strengths and weaknesses

So, the first step in the research and development of the exhibition was an audit of the current (2023) zine holdings across Leeds Central Library, ascertaining strengths and weaknesses and identifying gaps. (A parallel process was undertaken by the BL curatorial team, but this article will focus entirely on the experience of LL).

Football fanzine representation in the LL collections was particularly strong for the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, including Leeds United fan-made productions such as *The Square Ball*, *The Peacock*, *Crossbar*, and *The Hanging Sheep* – albeit all were incomplete with significant chronological gaps. Other football fanzines held by LL included Bradford City's *The City Gent* (1988–1999). All this material sat within the collections of our Local and Family History department (LFH). LFH also held several locally important or unique fanzines, including single copies of the 1991 alternative music fanzine *The Expression She Pulled* (printed in Bramley, Leeds), the 1980s political polemic *Who Owns Leeds*, and Issue 3 of the self-published Leeds fanzine *Coffee is for grown-ups* (Lucy Canter, c. 2010) – among other titles.

While containing some real treasures and individual gems, the collection as of 2023 was incoherent and comprised a mixture of material that had been haphazardly collected by individual library staff and donated by members of the public. As such, the collection was incomplete and constituted a significant gap in the collections of LL – and was hardly sufficient to fulfil the vision for *Voice of the Fans*.

Collecting additional material

While fanzines are, by their very nature, ephemeral and likely to disappear entirely if not collected and archived in the moment of circulation, LL librarians had increasingly felt, over several years, the importance of collecting this type of material. This was largely owing to growing awareness of its historical significance, and a consequent increase in requests from researchers – particularly for titles specific to Leeds: a city that had both an important (if still largely undervalued) alternative music and D.I.Y. culture scene through the 1970s and 1980s. *Voice of the Fans* was, therefore, seen as an ideal time to more coherently collect fanzine and fanzine-related publications for the LFH collections. Priority was given to locally produced titles, nationally significant publications, and, of course, any material required for background research or inclusion in the exhibition itself.

Collecting came largely from two sources: purchases and donations. Most of the former were made from secondhand seller websites such as eBay, including a £25 purchase of a mixed box of miscellaneous Leeds United fanzines, including many issues filling gaps in the LFH collections. Non-Leeds United football fanzines were also purchased in this way, to complement or flesh out the exhibition narrative – including early issues of important

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Yorkshire fanzines such as *Terrace Talk* (York City), and influential national titles such as *When Saturday Comes* and *Off the Ball*.

Donations were crucial, too. A press release in December 2024 called for football supporters to contact LFH with donations of fanzines they no longer wished to retain in their personal archives. Several responses were made to this call-out, which led to the accession of fanzines from fans of teams such as Northern Ireland, Manchester City, Huddersfield Town, and Leyton Orient, and North Ferriby United. Several of the *Voice of the Fans* volunteer team also donated copies of fanzines to the LFH collections.

Background research into the exhibition also drove curators towards seeking important or influential fanzines in the wider D.I.Y. culture, especially those based in Leeds and thus able to illustrate that scene locally. Examples include purchases of compilations and single issues of the early Leeds punk zine *Raising Hell* and reproduced copies of *New Pose* (bought direct from Martin Tindall, the fanzine's creator, via eBay).

More broadly, librarian consciousness as to the importance of zine and zine or D.I.Y. culture was significantly raised, and opportunities to acquire similar material were taken wherever possible. Copies, for instance, were purchased of the small-print *Red Riding: Yorkshire Radical History* journal, which complemented the library's already important holdings of alternative or counter-cultural journals such as *Leeds Other Paper* (1974–1994), and other West Yorkshire publications stretching back to the 19th century. The challenge now is to embed this collecting across the whole service rather than being reliant on individual staff interests.

The collaborative exhibition resulted in LL acquiring more football zines from many different sources.

Collecting and cataloguing fanzines: Voice of the Fans

Challenges and successes in cataloguing zines

The 'Cataloguing Artists' Books and Zines' conference, hosted by the Art Libraries Society UK & Ireland (ARLIS) at Leeds Arts University in March 2025, provided an opportunity to exchange ideas relating to the creation and cataloguing of zine collections in libraries. This coincided with the acquisition and cataloguing of materials for *Voice of the Fans*.

One dilemma common to libraries with developing zine collections was how to define a zine in the first place. Various ideas about constituted a zine were suggested including:

- Self-published by an individual or small (non-corporate) group; often relating to popular culture (such as music or sports club fanzines) or written for the benefit of campaign groups
- If the person(s) responsible for producing it considers it to be a zine
- D.I.Y. ethos, limited print run (under 1000 copies?) with cheap production methods (e.g. photocopied and assembled by hand)
- Not for profit

Even when certain criteria were decided upon, there were some instances where a decision about inclusion was not straightforward. Some football publications, for instance, had started off as small runs of black and white, photocopied, D.I.Y. zines but had evolved into glossy, professional, magazine-style publications, often indistinguishable from the official club matchday programmes they were ostensibly in opposition to. It was interesting to hear that deciding what to include in a zine collection often involved individual libraries defining the boundaries of their own collections, rather than having strict, easy to follow guidelines derived from an external agency.

We decided that it would be useful to create a new material format on our Library Management System (LMS) specifically for zines so that staff and customers could easily search for zines as a discrete collection. The bibliographic records for zine materials catalogued previously by LL staff were also updated with the new format to increase their presence and accessibility.

It was decided to create serial records for zines in our collection; holdings could simply be added as we acquired additional issues of a particular zine. Key bibliographic data such as title, publisher as well as any personal / corporate name entries were added as appropriate. It was important to make our zine collection accessible to as wide an audience as possible. Uncontrolled index terms were also utilised in addition to FAST subject headings. These uncontrolled keywords can be useful when cataloguing zines. Many zines, including ones in the LL collections, are produced by and for people from marginalised groups. Subject vocabularies, such as those

produced by the Library of Congress, are not always responsive to changes in language and terminology used by people in those communities. They can also have a bias towards American life and culture.

An awareness of regional variations in descriptive language including slang can be useful when considering index terms. An example of this would be “football firms” - a term used in England to describe a group of football hooligans usually associated with a particular football club; this does not appear in FAST terminology but might be used as a search term by people with an interest in reading about these groups.

As our zine collection develops, it would be useful to carry out more research and take opportunities to engage with people from different groups to exchange ideas about potential new search terms and to avoid using outdated language or terms which may be offensive. More generally, our approach to both cataloguing and collecting fanzines will continue to develop with future acquisitions and increased dialogue with both fanzine makers and readers.

Rethinking levels of cataloguing at the University of Manchester's Special Collections

When a team of cataloguers from different parts of the Metadata and Discovery team at the University of Manchester Library started collaborating on a project to catalogue a large special collection, certain discrepancies in our output started emerging. These involved the level of detail and speed/quantity of execution. Given the heterogeneity of the team, these seemed almost inevitable.

This specific issue prompted a revision of our established ideas about the Special Collections "levels of cataloguing" and helped us devise ways in which they can be used as the base to create improved cataloguing guidance and, indirectly, reinforce our institutional transmission of knowledge practices.

The idea of "levels of cataloguing"

Back in 2018, a project conducted by a group of Rare Print cataloguers was set up at the University of Manchester Library to create a document that outlined in a structured way different "Levels of Cataloguing for print books" ("Levels of Cataloguing" from now on) within Special Collections. The group looked at similar initiatives undertaken by other libraries and decided on the following 5 levels:

[Legacy] levels of cataloguing for printed books	
1	Minimal
2	Basic
3	Standard
4	Special Collections
5	Specialist cataloguing

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In my mind, each of these levels was established in base to three different criteria (my categories, not theirs):

1. The level of detail put into a record:
    a. minimal
    b. basic
    c. standard
    d. descriptive
    e. exhaustive
2. The practical objective of the cataloguing:
    a. inventory
    b. minimal discoverability
    c. enhanced discoverability
    d. detailed discoverability
    e. scholar research
3. The type of resource or collection it is aimed at:
    a. uncatalogued resources that need a skeleton record to exist in our library management system (Alma)
    b. uncatalogued resources that need to at least have a minimal presence in our discovery system (Primo)
    c. post-1800 resources
    d. pre-1800 resources and special items
    e. incunabula and very rare items

The Printed Books Office at the John Rylands Library, where much of the Special Collections cataloguing work takes place.

The Levels of Cataloguing document is structured in two parts. The first briefly goes through each of the levels describing what type of collection they are intended for; giving a general abstract idea of the level of detail and providing a list of fields that should be included in a record created at that level, even if the document warns that it:

> "is not a definitive list of what has to appear in a cataloguing record, just a guide. Every book is unique, as are their records. Some examples have been given but always refer to MARC 21 for guidance."

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The second part consists of a practical presentation of levels 1-4, following AACR2 and DCRM(B) standards, with examples. For level 4, for instance, we find the following information when going through the "note fields":

NOTE FIELDS		
GENERAL NOTE[S]	500	= 500 \\ $a One of five variants with different publishers' names in the imprint. First edition London, 1612.
BIBLIOGRAPHY, ETC.	504	= 504 \\ $a Includes bibliographical references and index.
FORMATTED CONTENTS NOTE	505	= 505 0\ $a The Old Town Hall -- Garratt Hall -- Hulme Hall -- The "Seven Stars" Inn -- The "Woolpack" Inn -- Black Friars Bridge -- Market Place -- Mr. Hyde's Shop -- Dr. White's House -- Ordsall Hall -- Old Buildings, Long Millgate -- Salford Cross -- Worsley Hall.
CITATION/ REFERENCES NOTE[S]	510	Printed and electronic sources. Use standard citations. = 510 4\ $a Adams, H.M. Catalogue of books printed on the continent of Europe, 1501-1600, in Cambridge libraries , $c M1740 = 510 4\ $a English short title catalogue, $c S122353
SUMMARY	520	= 520 \\ $a Howard Spring's first novel. Set in Manchester and Cheshire, it is a fast moving tale of city streets, racetracks, clubs and tenements.

For level 5, links are provided to certain records in the Library catalogue to be used as examples.

Workflow guidance

In principle, the Levels of cataloguing document should help clarify how much and what kind of detail Rare Print cataloguers might need to put into a record when cataloguing a particular special resource or collection. It must also be considered that the idea of levels of cataloguing and the document created to reflect the practical implications of the same, can possibly be of greater use to curators.

A curator is, at the University of Manchester University Library, the specialist who manages the collections pertaining to a particular subject or format within Special Collections; every particular aspect of it, including

their cataloguing. While a Rare Print cataloguer might spend their days cataloguing books from any special collection with no particular special features or workflow guidance attached to them, but within a particular standard that they are familiar with, curators find themselves in a more removed situation. Their understanding of cataloguing standards in general, and of the "levels of cataloguing" in particular, may be considered less deep but wider, more "panoramic", as they need, when the moment comes, to take into consideration the differences and nuances to make an informed decision on what level might the be the appropriate one for a particular collection under their care.

At the beginning of any particular cataloguing project, and depending on different factors, curators may decide to create a workflow document. Contributing factors to the creation of workflow guidance can be the exceptionality of a collection or the lack of familiarity of a curator with a cataloguer and their style, etc.

The University of Manchester Main Library, which houses many Rare Print collections, including the Medial (post-1800, classified) Printed Collection. Image via Flikr courtesy of Vita Student, CC BY 2.0.

A workflow document gives cataloguers participating in a cataloguing project a general background to the collection; specific provenance details and an orientation about what general MARC fields are needed to build up a record to the standard required; together with any formulaic information to be added to specific fields. This guarantees that cataloguers understand what information a curator regards as essential and wants to be reflected in the records created during the project. It also helps to avoid major discrepancies between records created for similar resources by different cataloguers, or by the same cataloguer at different times.

The Medical (post-1800, classified) Printed Collection: Wellcome-funded project and beyond

The Medical (post-1800, classified) Printed Collection is a very large special collection consisting of some 34,000 items and was the catalyst for revising the Levels of Cataloguing. The current cataloguing project for this collection developed from a Wellcome-funded project that involved the cataloguing of a portion of the

classified sequence (Public Health, Pathology and Clinical Medicine), consisting of a total of 7,000 books. This project took place from 2018 to 2020 and was undertaken by a single cataloguer. As part of the project, a workflow document was created in which it is stipulated that the cataloguing of the collection would be done to a level 3 standard as established in the, then recently created, levels of cataloguing document.

In practice, and due to factors that can be inferred (deadlines to be met), some of the definitory requirements for level 3 were taken at their minimal expression (7xx fields only for authorship or ownership related names, for example) or just not taken into consideration unless present in downloaded records (041, 546, 655 fields, for example).

After the Wellcome-funded cataloguing project came to an end, the cataloguing of the collection was resumed under the direction of our Science, Technology and Medicine Rare Books Curator, with an aim to catalogue materials that were left out of the initial project.

The cataloguing team

The Metadata and Discovery team, composed of 18 people, is part of the Collection Strategies Directorate within the University of Manchester Library. It is divided between the Digital and Special Collections metadata team and the Content Management metadata team. The Digital and Special Collections metadata team is composed of Rare Print cataloguers, Digital Collections cataloguers, and Institutional Repository metadata experts, while the Content Management Team consists of Modern Print cataloguers and E-resources cataloguers.

Special Collections is a Directorate within the University of Manchester Library. Special Collections materials (comprising archives, manuscripts, art, photographs, artifacts, printed collections and the digital assets resulting from the digitisation of any of these) and the curators who look after them are located across the John Rylands Library and the Main Library. As a rule of thumb, with some exceptions, collections consisting of materials mainly originating before 1801, and private press, are housed at the John Rylands Library, while post-1800 collections and maps are housed in the Main Library, at the Main Campus, off Oxford Road. There are further important archival collections at the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre, in Manchester Central Library, which document issues of race, ethnicity and migration, and the lived experience of Global Majority communities in Greater Manchester and further afield.

The most striking difference between the initial Wellcome cataloguing project on the Medical Printed Collections and the current, extended cataloguing project is that the former was dependent upon the efforts of a single cataloguer, while the latter depends on the cooperation of a heterogeneous group of cataloguers

whose main, everyday occupations lie within different areas of the Metadata and Discovery team. The cataloguing work is being carried out at a designated area within the Main Library at the Main Campus, but it does not involve everybody working together at the same time, and not everybody works the same days.

The John Rylands Library holds many of the University's Special Collections materials. Image from Flikr courtesy of Vita Student, CC BY 2.0.

Manchester's Central Library includes the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Centre. Image from Flikr courtesy of pedrik, CC BY NC SA 2.0.

The problem

The cataloguing of the Special Collections printed resources is, under normal circumstances, done by Rare Print cataloguers working alongside the curators, who manage the collections. On this project, the cooperation of colleagues who would not normally be involved in the cataloguing of Special Collections printed resources was deemed essential to its completion, but it presented some challenges. These colleagues occupy different metadata-related positions within the library, have different levels of familiarity with Rare Print resources, the standards used to catalogue these, and may also have divergent interpretations of these standards, because they might use them in a slightly different way in their substantive roles.

The workflow document created by the curator for the Medical Printed Collection is based on the restricted version of the level 3 of cataloguing established by the Wellcome-funded project cataloguer. It is very comprehensive and helpful document (I would say it is in a category of its own when it comes to workflow documents) and it effectively contributes to guiding and supporting cataloguers by providing a general vision of the project and its practical implications. But the common understanding between curator and Rare Print cataloguer, often the basis for workflow guidance documentation created within Special Collections, was less evident during this project. Indeed, some details might get lost in translation when presenting information in a necessarily generic way to colleagues with diverse cataloguing experiences in areas where concepts and standards might be used in a different way. The purpose of these workflow documents is just to present information about different aspects of a collection in a condensed format:, they can only go so far to clarify

specific points, otherwise they would become full cataloguing manuals.

It is also true that workflows might play a "foundational" and authoritative role in the life of a cataloguing project, but they are obviously not the only point of reference, or at least not a point of constant reference. In general, workflow documents are used by cataloguers until they feel they have got "the gist of it" and proceed then to create records by replicating what they have already been doing until that point. In the case of a collaborative effort like the one at hand, cataloguers might return to the workflow document in search of answers when new, specific problems arise during the cataloguing process, but they may equally decide to rely on an available colleague who, they believe, might be able to answer a specific question just as authoritatively, or at least more quickly.

In relation to the Medical Printed Collection, the general perception was that diverging ways of understanding of the standards this project was aiming for soon emerged. There was a specific concern that cataloguers with a Rare Print cataloguing background, or more experience with special collections, were adding unnecessary detail to records, and therefore only contributing a limited output to the project. There was a simultaneous concern that colleagues generally used to working on metadata for digital resources or modern print resources were missing detail in some records. This, of course, did not mean that there were some colleagues who were doing their task right and some who were doing it wrong. It just meant that it was still unclear when too much detail was too much and when too little was not enough for everybody to be on the same page.

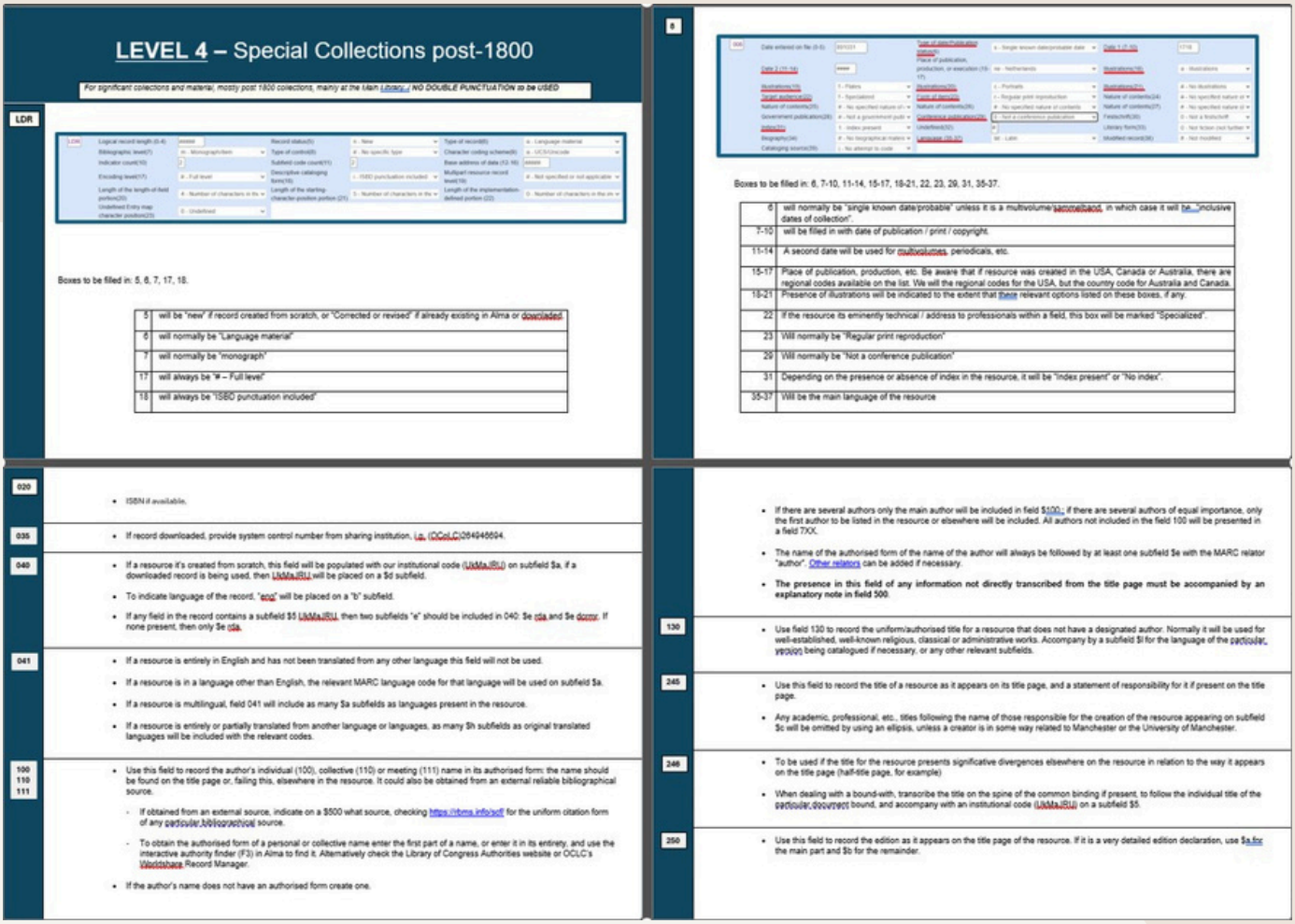
A solution

As a main solution to the specific problem related to the Medical (post-1800, classified) Printed Collection cataloguing project, it was agreed that I would redraft level 3 of the Levels of Cataloguing as a standalone document, for it to have a parallel existence to the Levels of Cataloguing document. The idea was to make it as granular as possible, so it could be used as a reinforced point of reference for colleagues working on the project who needed more detail on the use of particular fields as intended within this level. This new document would still aim to advise on the cataloguing of post-1800 resources as undertaken by a Rare Print metadata assistant working at Special Collections (what in the original Levels of Cataloguing document was Level 3 - Standard), but it would include clearly signaled advice on the restricted use of certain fields within large cataloguing projects.

The idea of levels of cataloguing itself emerged and was used exclusively within Rare Print/Special Collections. Until recently, colleagues from other areas of the Metadata and Discovery team were not aware of it and, when initially introduced to it, even found it slightly confusing. Modern Collections cataloguers,

Rethinking levels of cataloguing at the University of Manchester's Special Collections

for example, were primarily familiar with Alma's brief record levels, where Alma inductively determines if your record falls into a superior or inferior cataloguing level within a predetermined scale, depending on whether certain fields (in particular fields with standardised identifiers) have been used.



Levels of Cataloguing guidance for Level 4: Special Collections post-1800.

To establish a bridge between the Modern Print cataloguing context and Rare Print cataloguing, a new standard was added to the Levels of cataloguing. The idea behind this is that this move would allow for a more intuitive comparison of the specifics of Modern Print collections cataloguing and Rare Print cataloguing practices, and a wider understanding established. It could now be said that, at least at a theoretical level, the levels of cataloguing are no longer considered to be just a Special Collections, since they aspire to provide structural clarification and guidance (now updated to RDA/DCRMR standards) for all printed collections at the University of Manchester Library.

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With the introduction of the new level of cataloguing, a re-naming of levels was considered necessary. This is a provisional list of the new levels, that now go from 1 to 6:

[New] levels of cataloguing for printed books	
1	Inventory (minimum level for identification)
2	Core (minimum level for discoverability)
3	Modern Collections
4	Special Collections post-1800
5	Special Collections pre-1800 (plus private press and special items)
6	Incunabula (and very rare items)

Further developments and an overarching cataloguing principle

In principle, this should solve the particular problem that we were dealing with for the Medical Print Collection, but we decided to extend the comprehensive "granular" description treatment that I used for level 4 to levels 3, 5 and 6. Down the line, we intend to do this for formats other than books (maps, bound-withs, playbills, etc.). This, satisfies for three basic purposes:

- Standardisation and clarification purposes: to structure, fix and make available in a clean format the principles that guide our current cataloguing practices for institutional knowledge transmission purposes.
- To create a detailed "menu" for curators with printed collections under their care, so that they may choose with greater knowledge of the details, what would be the appropriate level for their collections.
- To provide metadata assistants with a clear and comprehensive aid to cataloguing special collections at different levels.

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Despite the rationalisation and compartmentalisation that the levels of cataloguing comprise, I have proposed that, when cataloguing within levels 4-6, any bibliographic or physical evidence found in any resource in any format that relates to any Greater Manchester-related reality should be recorded. This should involve creating local headings when necessary, or at least flagging the resource for these to be created.

This is a modest but meaningful way in which the Metadata and Discovery Team can contribute to the University of Manchester's commitments to social responsibility and civic engagement: giving visibility to individuals, places, events related to Greater Manchester, and making resources related to these more accessible to the public.

Cataloguing with Confidence
Event Report: Thursday 24th April

As an archivist, I occasionally puzzle over catalogue entries for printed books – or simply look puzzled when librarian colleagues talk about a '100' or '245' field.

In April, I attended a "Cataloguing with Confidence" workshop organised by the CILIP Metadata and Discovery Group and Academic Libraries North at the University of Manchester, brilliantly presented by Emma Booth (University of Manchester Library) and Will Peaden (Lanchester Library, Coventry University). The workshop was aimed at those who want to further develop their knowledge of cataloguing practices and standards, such as paraprofessionals, new librarians, and people like me, who are not librarians but are responsible for print collections and oversee the work of cataloguers. This was reflected in the attendees and the variety of institutions represented on the day: I sat with colleagues from public libraries and universities, as well as trainee librarians, postgraduate students, and the odd archivist. The session focused on modern print cataloguing but was also relevant to those working with special collections.

Emma and Will began by asking what cataloguing is and why it is important, exploring key concepts such as classification and metadata, and emphasising the importance of discoverability, usability, and putting users first. They took us through the history of cataloguing and how standards have developed, pointing out that some of the standards that are in use in most libraries today pre-date the advent of home computers and were influenced by analogue technologies. Depending on what classification and subject headings we use, we may be following rules set out by librarians over a century ago.

After a superb overview of AACR2, MARC/MARC21, RDA and BIBFRAME, the session moved on to subject headings and classifications. This included a discussion of the challenges of relying on Library of Congress Subject Headings and standards that are not informed by the people and communities they describe. Emma and Will revisited ideas outlined earlier in the workshop – such as the notion of 'good quality' metadata – as part of a discussion on critical cataloguing and how we might approach these concepts in a different way.

Cataloguing with Confidence
Event Report: Thursday 24th April

Later, attendees got their hands on a variety of printed books and created basic catalogue records using MARC.

I came away from the workshop with a much clearer understanding of cataloguing standards and their history, as well as greater confidence in my ability to communicate more effectively with librarian colleagues. I will certainly recommend it to other archivists. Despite the clear conceptual differences between archives and libraries, much of the session felt familiar: the emphasis on accurate, high-quality metadata, the importance of making collections visible, and ongoing debates around more inclusive cataloguing practices. There appear to be parallels between the development and implementation of BIBFRAME and the new archival standard, Records in Contexts (RiC).

Above all, the workshop highlighted the enduring importance of cataloguing: not only to meet the needs of users today, but also to serve those who come after us. It also reinforced the idea that advocacy for the value of cataloguing remains essential.

Methods may have changed, but cataloguing remains as important as ever. Image © Jane Gallagher.

From the Château de Chantilly

On Saturday, 12 July 2025, I visited the Château de Chantilly for the exhibition "Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry". The Château, a location of the Institut de France, is easily accessible from the Gare du Nord in Paris. I dragged my family from South Wales to France specifically for a chance to see the *Très Riches Heures* of Jean, Duke of Berry.

This manuscript is rarely displayed and never outside of the Musée Condé on the Château's estate, per the terms of the duke of Aumale in 1886. It was last on display in 2004 and rarely available to researchers. For me, the opportunity to see this exhibition was a return to my academic days. I had seen *Les Belles Heures* when they were part of *The Art of Illumination* exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2010 and become a fan of the Limbourg brothers, writing about *Les Belles Heures*' Death of Christ image and use of shadowing in my Master's degree coursework in 2012. As a librarian (and having had so much more experience with manuscripts and conservation issues since 2012), I greatly appreciated that the exhibition worked to not just contextualise the manuscript (it was lovely to see *TRH* united with *LBH* and the *Grandes Heures*) but to describe how the flaking of the pigments from the parchment were the catalyst for conservation work and, with the loose stitching of the calendar section, they took advantage of it to do more stabilisation and subsequently had the quire pulled apart and put on display. It was a fascinating glimpse into an aspect of the manuscript that even scholars previously allowed to view the manuscript would not have had.

For more on the Château, visit https://chateaudechantilly.fr/en/who-are-we. The exhibition is on until 5 October 2025: https://chateaudechantilly.fr/en/evenement/les-tres-riches-heures-du-duc-de-berry. If you haven't planned a summer break yet, this would be a wonderful option!

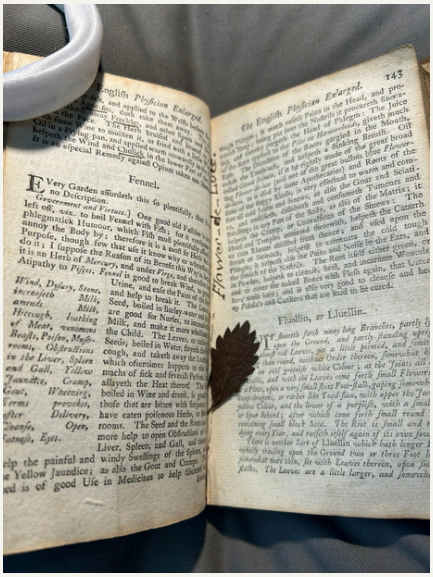
Left: Château de Chantilly.
Right: *TRH*, fol. 51v-52, depicting the Three Kings.
Images © Katherine Krick-Pridgeon

Biological Insertions at Bristol

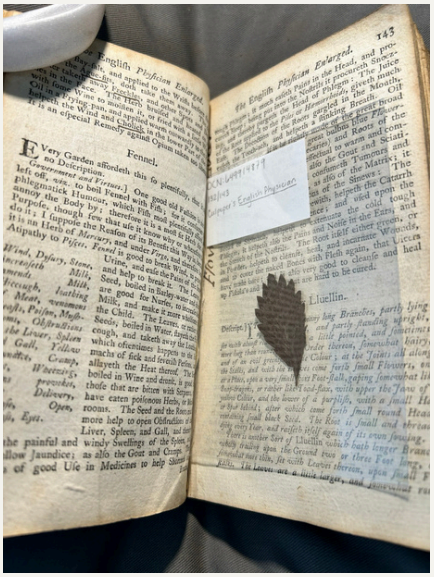
The University of Bristol (UoB) has had an opportunity to put in practice the advice from Katie Birkwood about using appropriate handling of and subject headings for biological insertions in books featured in our Spring 2025 newsletter..

In early May 2025, I had a copy of Nicholas Culpeper's *The English Physician Enlarged*, dating from around 1760, to catalogue (https://bris.on.worldcat.org/oclc/649914879). This volume had come into the University's possession as part of a bequest and my team had been making our way through the nearly 700 items. Due to the fragile nature of the volume and the many pressed plants inside as well as missing leaves, this volume became my responsibility. I had been aware of pressed plants in volumes in a previous library role, but had never been responsible for crafting a catalogue record noting such. I had listened with great interest to Birkwood's presentation at the RBSCG Conference in Edinburgh in September 2024 and had read through her article for the Spring 2025 newsletter. I felt reasonably prepared, especially now that the controlled vocabulary terms had been approved by RBMS.

There was a slight delay in doing the full cataloguing, as I was going to take Birkwood's advice and place the items in Melinex (we do not have a conservation department, nor was the volume a candidate for sending to a third party for conservation work). I sourced some Melinex from our Special Collections team (through a quirk of restructures, the only book cataloguers for UoB Library Services sit within the Digital Services team). I used a pair of tweezers to test the edge of each item of plant matter and once assured it was robust enough to be pulled from the gutter, I did so. In all, there were six pressed plants, all placed within Melinex envelopes alongside archival paper identification slips. A note was added in a 500 field with the date this work was done.



Left: Image of leaf in situ at the opening of pages 132 and 143 (pages removed).
Right: Image of same leaf following Melinex and labelling.
Images © Katherine Krick-Pridgeon



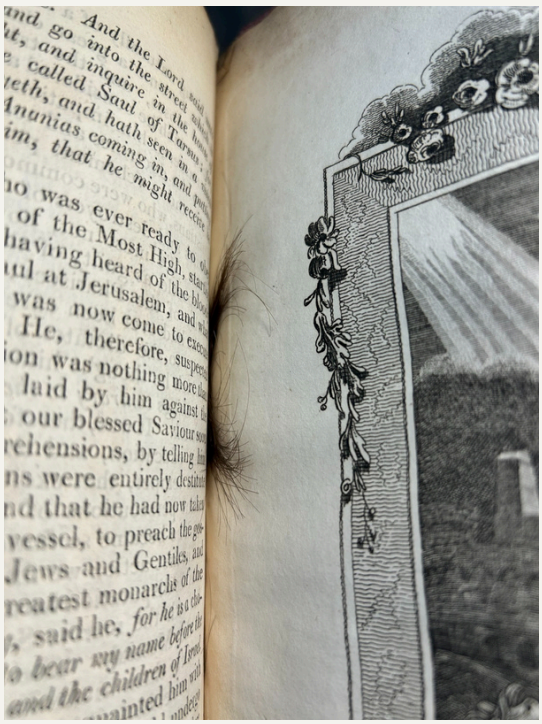
Biological Insertions at Bristol

If you are not familiar with cataloguing within WorldShare Management Systems (the LMS built by OCLC), I will mention that there is a bibliographic record on one level and then a local bibliographic record unique to your institution. I placed the 655 subject headings in the local bibliographic record, using both "Biological insertions" and "Pressed plants" with the requisite $2 rbmscv.

Above: local bibliographic fields and the 655 subject headings used.
Image © Katherine Krick-Pridgeon

Strangely enough, the very next volume on my pile from the same bequest was a very different type of work requiring similar technique: an 1811 copy of John Fleetwood's *The Life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. This volume contained a variety of objects inserted, though a pressed leaf and a lock of hair (https://bris.on.worldcat.org/oclc/690778409) were the only biological materials. It almost felt like a let-down that the 655 _ 7 we used was not differentiated - I would have been very excited to include one just for the hair!

We now have some guidelines available to the Metadata Team for how we deal with biological matter inserted in books and I look forward to seeing what more wondrous and bizarre things we might stumble across in future cataloguing efforts!



Right: Lock of hair in situ in Fleetwood's work, between page 330 and a tipped-in image..
Image © Katherine Krick-Pridgeon

Review

Kris Butler, Drink Maps in Victorian Britain. Oxford: Bodleian Library Publishing, 2024. 182 p. illus. ISBN 9781851245789. £25.00 hbk.

Drink Maps in Victorian Britain, written by Kris Butler, the past president of the Boston Map Society and current member of the board of the Washington Map Society, presents a detailed exploration into the history of alcohol in Great Britain during the nineteenth century. The book introduces a comprehensive account of the temperance movement which set out to ban the consumption and sale of alcohol throughout Britain and the United States. Illustrated throughout with beautiful images of maps, posters, and newspapers, this book is a fascinating insight into a potentially lesser known aspect of Victorian society.

Ahead of chapter one, the reader can view the first map, which highlights the 'Geographical Distribution of Drunkenness' in England and Wales, dating from 1886. This map lays out the scale of alcohol consumption within the area and illustrates the 'problem' the temperance movement intended to solve, highlighting the areas where drunkenness was most prolific.

For readers who are unfamiliar with this part of the nineteenth century, the information provided in the opening is key in setting out the scale of alcohol consumption in Britain at the time and highlights the reasoning behind the creation of the movement, why abstinence was being practised, and why it was thought of as key for the functioning of a prosperous and moral society. The rise in criminal offences and alcohol consumption is linked throughout the book which explores why some "teetotallers" thought of alcohol as having a bad influence on behaviour and was one of the reasons behind the movement's popularity. The famous etching and engravings of "Beer Street" and "Gin Lane" by William Hogarth worked to support the argument of the Gin Act against the consumption of gin, by depicting unruly behaviour and dangers in contrast to the drinking of beer, where society is depicted as more civil.

The key also illustrates important dates within the temperance movement such as the 'Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1872' which stopped miners from being paid their wages in drink shops and the 'Truck Amendment Act' which forbade agricultural workers who worked in beer or cider from being paid wages in alcohol. These major reforms are listed alongside other historical achievements such as free education for children aged from five to thirteen in 1891, which improved literacy and work chances, alongside advancements such as the railways opening in 1838. All of these show the improvements being made to society, and how the temperance movement was contributing to these changes.

Throughout the book, the maps themselves are displayed in plates, with the original useful keys included. Their importance to the temperance movement is illustrated throughout as propaganda to support their argument for sobriety, as they highlight the vast scale of shops and pubs selling alcohol in cities throughout Britain. It is interesting to look at these in the twenty-first century when many pubs are closing down and communities are seen on the news fighting to keep their 'locals' open, as they are often considered the heart of the community in today's society.

Review

Kris Butler, Drink Maps in Victorian Britain. Oxford: Bodleian Library Publishing, 2024. 182 p. illus. ISBN 9781851245789. £25.00 hbk. (cont'd)

Although, as the title suggests, the book's focus is on this movement throughout Victorian Britain, the Temperance Movement is often better known for its influence within the United States. There are references to the movement in America within Butler's work, with notable people from the States being mentioned for the part they played in this historical period.

Overall, Butler presents a very engaging book, with meticulous research drawing on the Bodleian library's vast collections, and beautiful full-page illustrations which animate the history being described. This work allows us to reflect on our current relationship with alcohol in modern society and its conflicting presence in the community aspects of social gatherings and national celebrations, made available due to longer pub opening hours, and advocated as an economic benefit by governments. However, these occasions often have negative impacts on individual health and put added pressure on an already struggling NHS. It is clear that the issues described throughout Victorian society can be paralleled with our own, contemporary lives.

Around the UK

Unearthed: The Power of Gardening

British Library: 2 May - 10 August 2025

Accompanying Living Knowledge Network displays at public libraries around the UK from 2 May.

Unearthed: The Power of Gardening explores the transformative, enriching and sometimes radical power of gardening in Britain and how it impacts people, communities, and the environment.

From rural and urban gardens and allotments to indoor gardens and windowsills, the exhibition delves into how the act of gardening heals and sustains people in a multitude of ways. It explores how gardening brings people together, empowers communities, and shapes our relationship with the natural world. It also considers gardening as a form of activism, as a means of challenging land ownership and highlighting social disparities, as well as the consequences of the international movement of plants for the environment and human societies.

As part of the Living Knowledge Network, local versions of *Unearthed* will be on display in public libraries across the UK, featuring items from their own rare book collections. From John Gerard, William Curtis and Jane Loudon, to lesser known figures such as the visually impaired botanist John Grimshaw Wilkinson who identified plant specimens with his tongue. You can expect to see 17th century herbals, beautifully hand-coloured botanical works, and detailed maps showing how green spaces have evolved over time, in your public libraries this summer.

Leeds

Voice of the Fans

How fanzines, and the communities that create them, changed the beautiful game.

Leeds Central Library, 9 May – 10 August 2025

An exhibition co-produced by Leeds Libraries and the British Library.

Voice of the Fans will explore the influence and impact of grassroots self-publishing in football, trace its development from the 1960s through to the contemporary digital age, and shine a light on the role of libraries in preserving these histories.

Born out of the D.I.Y. ethos of the music and punk scenes, the raw creativity of football zines remains inspiring and relevant in today's global game. This exhibition showcases fan-driven creativity from the UK and Ireland, and features some of the longest running and most influential football zines, alongside stories of well-known names who started their careers writing for these grassroots publications.

Leeds (cont'd)

Voice of the Fans (cont'd)

The show will include copies of the popular Leeds United fanzine *The Square Ball*, *Marching Altogether*, founded by Leeds fans to campaign against racism and fascism in football and Bradford City's *City Gent* – the longest running football zine in the country. The exhibition will also feature influential publications from the British Library's collection including *Foul* and *The End*.

Voice of the Fans will include exciting loans from the National Library of Scotland and the National Football Museum, as well as zines, badges and scarves donated by passionate football fans.

We hope that this show will highlight the humour and ingenuity of football fanzines but also how they are a vehicle for building communities, sparking change and amplifying voices in the fight against racism and homophobia, while championing women's football and grassroots action.
For more information - Voice of the Fans exhibition | Leeds Library

London

90 years of Penguin's history

Waterstones Piccadilly, London

Now to 31 August 2025

The University of Bristol is pleased to be exhibiting material from their Penguin Archive as part of the 90th anniversary of Penguin at Waterstones Piccadilly. The material will be on display for free until 31st August 2025. For more detail on the exhibition and the various celebrations of the Penguin collections, see https://www.penguin.co.uk/discover/campaigns/penguin-at-waterstones-piccadilly. For more on the University of Bristol's Penguin Archive, see https://www.bristol.ac.uk/library/special-collections/strengths/penguin/.

Aberystwyth

Reunited: The Great Bibles of Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell

National Library of Wales

21 June 2025 - 22 November 2025

https://www.library.wales/visit/things-to-do/exhibitions/reunited-the-great-bibles-of-henry-viii-and-thomas-cromwell

For the first time in almost 500 years, the personal Bibles of King Henry VIII and his chief advisor, Thomas Cromwell, are being brought together. These beautifully made books, created in 1538 or 1539, were printed on parchment and decorated by some of the best artists in Europe. They show how politics and religion were closely connected during the English Reformation.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