

**A SECOND LETTER TO THE EARL  
OF ELLESMERE, ON THE  
MANAGEMENT OF THE LIBRARY  
OF PRINTED BOOKS IN THE  
BRITISH MUSEUM**

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A Second Letter to the Earl of Ellesmere, On the Management of the Library of Printed Books in the British Museum by John Edward Gray

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**JOHN EDWARD GRAY**

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MANAGEMENT OF THE LIBRARY  
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*From the Author,*

A  
**SECOND LETTER**  
TO  
**THE EARL OF ELLESMERE,**  
ON  
**THE MANAGEMENT**  
OF THE  
**LIBRARY OF PRINTED BOOKS**  
IN  
**THE BRITISH MUSEUM.**

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**LONDON:**  
**1849.**

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1902  
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY  
FROM THE  
ANDREW FREESTON FEABODY  
FUND

July 23, 1940

"The Department of *Natural History* ought to have better assistance, and be transferred somewhere else, in which case there would be room enough for *Books* even immediately. I wish to impress upon the Committee the absolute necessity of this separation. No good can ever be done without it."—*Panizzi*, in *Rep. Comm. Brit. Mus.* 1836, ii. 392. n. 4800.

"In short, for the accomplishment of your views, you would desire, first, an annual grant of the amount of more than 12,000*l.* a year for the Library; next, the institution of two or more Libraries for the use of the public, with somewhat different views, in London; and, thirdly, the removal from the British Museum of the *Natural History Department*, for the purpose of affording extra space for the increased library?

"Not only space, but the extra assistance which is requisite."—*Panizzi*, *Rep. Comm. Brit. Mus.* 1836, ii. 392. n. 480.

"Scientific men are jealous of their authority; they are dogmatical and narrow-minded; and, as they think themselves infallible, they never would consult an officer. I think they would do the very reverse; if an officer were to suggest one way, they would just do the other to show their independence and superior judgment. I speak from what I have known of them."—*Panizzi*, l. c. p. 406. n. 4929.

"The scientific men would spoil the men of rank, or drive them away from the Board. I speak seriously, and from experience. An officer would have no chance against a scientific man who should take a crotchet into his head; and they are all crotchety."—*Panizzi*, l. c. p. 406. n. 4930.

"I never saw scientific men go right, or view things as other people do."—*Panizzi*, l. c. p. 407. n. 4933.

LONDON:  
SCOTTISWOODS and SHAW,  
New-street-Square.

## A SECOND LETTER,

See. &c.

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British Museum, April 4. 1849.

MY LORD,

In a Letter which I lately addressed to you as Chairman of the Commission on the British Museum, I restricted myself to the statement of some general principles regarding the management of the Library of Printed Books, and supported them by some statistical details.

As the principles then set forth were partly the result of my own experience in the management of a department in the Museum, strengthened by various authorities I had consulted for the purpose of correcting any misapprehension into which I might have fallen, I think it advisable to lay before your Lordship, in a second Letter, some of the facts and observations which I have collected, and which appear to support my views, though at the risk of bringing forward some facts already known to the Commissioners.

I may premise that the existence of good Catalogues of the works in the Library, and easy access to the books, are of vital importance to me in performing my duties in the Museum; and I am fully aware that they must be equally desirable to all engaged in similar pursuits, as well as to those who are occupied in any literary undertaking. I feel, consequently, that I am merely fulfilling a duty to the department over which I preside, and to the public, whose servant I am, in doing what I can to render the Library useful. I may also, I hope, be excused for observing that, though much valuable information may be obtained from literary

persons in general, and from the frequenters of the Reading-room in particular, there are many parts of the management of a Library which can only be cognisant to one acquainted with its internal organisation. The making of Catalogues and the management of a Library formed the favourite study of my father, who many years ago offered to make a Classed Catalogue of the works in the Museum; and I have inherited from him the same taste. I have therefore, during the many (nearly 30) years I have been employed in the Museum, either as an unpaid volunteer, or as an officer of the establishment, always taken great interest in the arrangement of the Library; and, in my numerous excursions to the Continent for Natural History purposes, I have made it a point to visit and examine the public and private Libraries of the different towns, and thus acquired some knowledge of the management of most of the larger Libraries on this side of the Alps.

I shall first enter into some details with regard to the Catalogue, and then proceed to the management of the Library, and the supply of works to the Reading-room.

I. In support of my suggestion for separating the Catalogue into Parts defined by Language,

I may state that Mr. Baber, when he submitted to the Trustees his plan for the new Alphabetical Catalogue on the 6th of May, 1834, proposed "to divide the labour of the same amongst the Librarians to be simultaneously employed on this undertaking, viz., to assign to Mr. Glover all the titles in the English language; to Mr. Panizzi all those in French, Italian, and other languages of the southern half of Europe; and to Mr. Horne all that embrace the productions of ancient Greek and Roman authors, as well as those written by authors of all nations in the Latin tongue. That the titles of works written in German, Danish, and all the various languages used in the northern half of Europe, be reserved for the inspection of a foreigner of sufficient qualifications, hereafter to be appointed for this special purpose." — *Rep. Sel. Comm. Brit. Mus.* 1836, App. 540.



It appears to me that if the Parts of the Catalogues were to be separately prepared, it would be better for the sake of uniformity and to insure the responsibility of each author, that they should be separately printed. I believe that the division of responsibility in the Catalogue here proposed is the chief reason that it has not to this day been completed, although a large sum of money and much labour have been expended on it; and this delay would have been avoided if the four Parts had been separately produced. I need scarcely point out the difficulties which must arise in printing in common with the English alphabet the titles of works written in Hebrew and languages akin to it, or in the Russian, modern Greek, and other languages, some of which possess letters having no equivalent in our alphabet.

The plan of dividing the Catalogues by languages has been partly adopted in the MS. Department, where separate Catalogues of the *Syriac*, of the *Arabic*, and of the *Ethiopic* MSS. have been published, and an arrangement is now making for a Catalogue of the *Persian*, by a person specially employed for the work; and if this system had been in use in the Printed-book Department when Dr. Bialloblotzky was employed on the Hebrew works, as Dr. Prevost is on the Chinese, we might have had their labours given to the world.

It is to me a great argument in favour of having the Catalogue of English works printed separately, that it will follow, as a necessary consequence, that the English part of the Library must be made more comprehensive. Sir Harris Nicolas has some very important remarks on this subject in his *Animadversions*, p. 36., where he says: "At present the deficiencies in English literature are so great, that the cheapest as well as the rarest books are often wanting."

The problem to be solved is, how to make an Index or Finding Catalogue the most easy of consultation. It is evident that the smaller the number of books in each subdivision of the list, the more easy will it be to find the work required; and the simplest and most natural division appears to be supplied by the language in which the books are written.

In a Classed Catalogue, where the divisions are determined by the classification, the works in all languages should be placed in one series.

II. I shall next refer to a few of the existing Catalogues of English Libraries, both alphabetical and classed, giving a slight indication of the size of the Catalogues, and, as far as these facts can be ascertained from very imperfect data, the Number of Persons employed, and the Time occupied in their Formation.

1. *The British Museum Library.* — The last Catalogue of this Library was published in 7 vols. 8vo, in 1819. It contains the titles of about 120,000 volumes arranged alphabetically (*Rep. B. M. App. i. 399.*), and was prepared by the two Librarians and an attendant, who had the other duties of their office to attend to. It was commenced in 1807, and printed and published in the middle of May, 1817.

Sir H. Ellis states, in a Report to the Trustees dated April 30. 1834, that "as soon as he was placed at the head of the Printed-book Department, in 1806, and Mr. Baber made Assistant-Keeper, the preparation of a new Alphabetical Catalogue of the Library was ordered by the Trustees, and undertaken by the two Librarians, jointly. Sir H. Ellis was answerable for the letters A to F, with P, Q, and R, comprising one half of the Catalogue. Mr. Baber took the other letters. The first revision and continuation of the Catalogue of 1787 were entered upon in March, 1807, and finished in May, 1809: all the titles of additional works up to that time were inserted. In the course of this first labour, defects and inaccuracies of a very extraordinary kind having been discovered in the original Catalogue (*see Report to the Trustees, Feb. 1809*), a second revision, or rather remodelling, of the old part was ordered, which commenced in March, 1809, and finished in November, 1810.

"The printing of the Catalogue in the octavo form began in December, 1810, and was finished on May 10. 1817. During

the progress of the work through the press Dr. Burney's large library came in, and towards the close that of Baron Moll, from Munich; all the articles contained in both of which, under such letters as had not been printed off, were inserted before the sheets were sent to press. The two Librarians, it is to be observed, could neither of them give their undivided attention to the printing of their respective portions of this Catalogue; much time being consumed by the other business of the department. The time occupied in the first revision was 1 year 11 months; in the second revision, 1 year 6 months; in printing, 5 years 5 months: in all, 8 years 10 months. The first and third volumes were also reprinted during this time. The work, for convenience' sake, was printed in half-sheets of eight pages. The volumes which Sir H. Ellis edited comprised 286 half-sheets, making close upon an average of five half-sheets, or forty pages, corrected per month. Mr. Baber proceeded at the same rate, and finished his portion of the work at the same time. Sir H. Ellis, at Mr. Heber's particular recommendation, gave long titles, as the Trustees will see by referring to the volumes, and *every title was collated with the proof-sheets.*"

2. *The King's Library in Kensington Palace.*\* — A Catalogue was published in 3 vols. folio, London, 1820—1829.

This Library was removed to the British Museum in 1828. The number of books was about 61,250, exclusive of a very numerous assortment of pamphlets, principally contained in 868 cases, and requiring about 140 more cases to contain the whole. This Library, when transferred to the British Museum, was under the care of a Librarian, three Assistant-Librarians, two Extra Assistants and an Attendant. The Librarian had, in 1822, been employed 60, one of the Assistants 40, and the Attendant 36 years. (*Report of Select Comm. of H. of C.,*

\* The transfer of this Library to the Museum had an important effect on the Institution; for it was in the Report of the Committee above quoted that the present building now forming the Museum was first recommended to be commenced, and that "the part of it which shall be first begun should be appropriated for this Library."