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## The Rare Book Collection of the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Library at Cherkas Global University

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the rare book collection of the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Library at Cherkas Global University and considers it as an independent object of library science and source-critical research. The study focuses on the formation, structure, and composition of the rare collection, which includes editions published between 1455 and 1836, i.e., from the beginning of European printing to the first third of the nineteenth century. It is shown that the chronological boundaries of the collection are determined both by the history of print culture and by the requirements of scholarly classification of book collections.

The article reconstructs the institutional history of the library, the stages of its transformation from a university collection into a fundamental library with a rare book collection, and the role of Masonic and historical publications in shaping the library's profile holdings. Particular attention is paid to the characteristics of individual groups within the collection: incunabula and post-incunabula, editions of the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries, as well as books of the Enlightenment and the early period of U.S. national publishing.

Methodologically, the research relies on a set of general scientific, library, and book-historical methods, including analysis and synthesis, systemic and historical approaches, and elements of bibliographical and provenance attribution. As a result, the article demonstrates that the rare collection has substantial scholarly value as a source for the history of the book, intellectual culture, and transnational connections of the early modern period and the early nineteenth century.

**Keywords:** P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Library, Cherkas Global University, rare collection, 1455–1836, cataloguing, library science.

### 1. Introduction

The library of Cherkas Global University began to take shape as early as 1992, and by 2019 its total holdings amounted to approximately 1,500 books. Beginning on January 10, 2020, the library also started to develop an electronic collection.

On August 1, 2022, the library was officially renamed the “P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Electronic Library.” Prokopii Antonovich Cherkasov (1659–1725) was a representative of the Cherkasov (Keretsky) family. In the early 1700s, his estate in the village of Kereti (in the territory of the Tsardom of Muscovy) hosted a shelter for the visually impaired.

In the autumn of 2024, in connection with the creation of a library collection devoted to the Masonic Order of Knights Templar, the library began to acquire printed (paper) books. On June 6, 2025, the printed holdings were merged with the electronic holdings, and the library received its current name: the “P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Library.”

As of 2025, all printed books in the library are divided into three collections: the Rare Collection (1455–1836), the Victorian Collection (1837–1899), and the Modern Collection (1900–present). The chronological boundaries of these collections are justified as follows. The Rare Collection includes books

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published from 1455, i.e., from the publication of the first printed book in world history – the Gutenberg Bible. The Victorian Collection almost entirely coincides with the Victorian era, with the only difference being that it ends not in 1901 but in 1899; this was done for the convenience of classifying nineteenth-century books. The Modern Collection needs no additional explanation.

## 2. Materials and methods

The materials used in this study comprise the Rare Collection of the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Library, a structural unit of Cherkas Global University. The Rare Collection includes books published between 1455 and 1836. In total, the library holds 25 books from this period, as well as two incunable leaves printed in 1464 and 1474.

Methodologically, the study relies on a combination of general scientific, specialized library-science, and interdisciplinary methods. For example, analysis and synthesis were applied to break down the object of study (a book or a collection) into constituent elements and then integrate them into a coherent descriptive model. The systemic approach made it possible to consider the library collection as an integral system with internal connections (collection structure, typology of editions, chronology), while the historical method allowed the collections to be examined in the dynamics of their formation and circulation.

## 3. Discussion

The history of Cherkas Global University and its structural units has repeatedly become the subject of scholarly research. For example, A. Yu. Peretyatko devoted a study to the organization's publication activity (Peretyatko, 2024), while S. N. Gonta analyzed the publication activity of the Laboratory of World Civilizations for 2014–2024 (Gonta, 2025). In 2019, V. V. Tarakanov and M. A. Ponomareva undertook a comprehensive attempt to examine the organization's activities from 2014 to 2019 (Tarakanov, Ponomareva, 2019).

One of the university's structural units is the museum dedicated to the American Order of Knights Templar, whose exhibits have also repeatedly become objects of research. For instance, museum materials have been used for a biographical study of Sir Frederick S. Rogers (1847–1908) (Cherkas, 2024) and other figures of that era, and the museum collections have likewise been examined (Cherkasova, 2025).

The library of Cherkas Global University has also been studied: in 2023, I. Yu. Cherkasova devoted a paper to this topic (Cherkasova, 2023).

## 4. Results

The library's Rare Collection can be divided into four main parts:

1. Incunabula and post-incunabula (1455–1540) (two leaves from different incunabula and one book containing two works);
  2. Editions of 1541–1699 (three books);
  3. Editions of 1700–1799 (five books);
  4. Editions of 1800–1836 (sixteen books).
- These parts are discussed below.

### 4.1. Incunabula and post-incunabula

As is well known, the dating of incunabula, i.e., the earliest printed books in the world, covers the period from 1455 to 1500, inclusive. Books published from 1501 to 1540 are referred to as post-incunabula. Three items in the library fall under this periodization: two leaves from different incunabula and one post-incunable book.

The earliest printed item in the library is an incunable leaf from Adolf Rusch, *Sophologium* (Rusch, 1464), printed in Strasburg in 1464 (Figure 1), i.e., nine years after the publication of the first printed book in the world, the Gutenberg Bible (1455). This leaf was acquired at an auction in the United Kingdom in 2025.

The second earliest item is also an incunable leaf, from a work attributed to Königshofen, printed in 1474 (Königshofen, 1474), presenting a fragment from a German universal chronicle (Figure 2). At present, it has not been possible to establish the exact title of the incunable; however, during source-critical examination the place and year of publication, the printer, and the authorial tradition were confirmed.

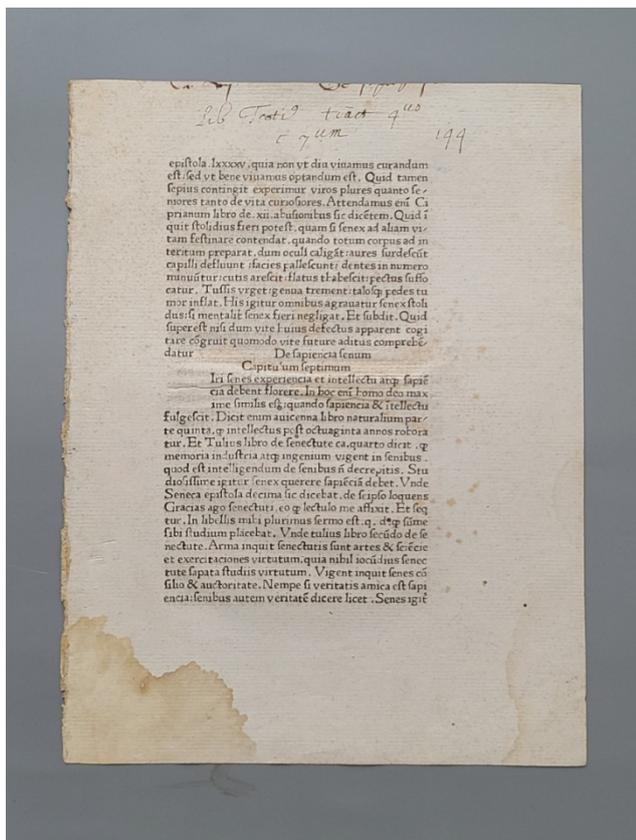


Fig. 1. Incunable leaf from Adolf Rusch, *Sophologium* (1464)

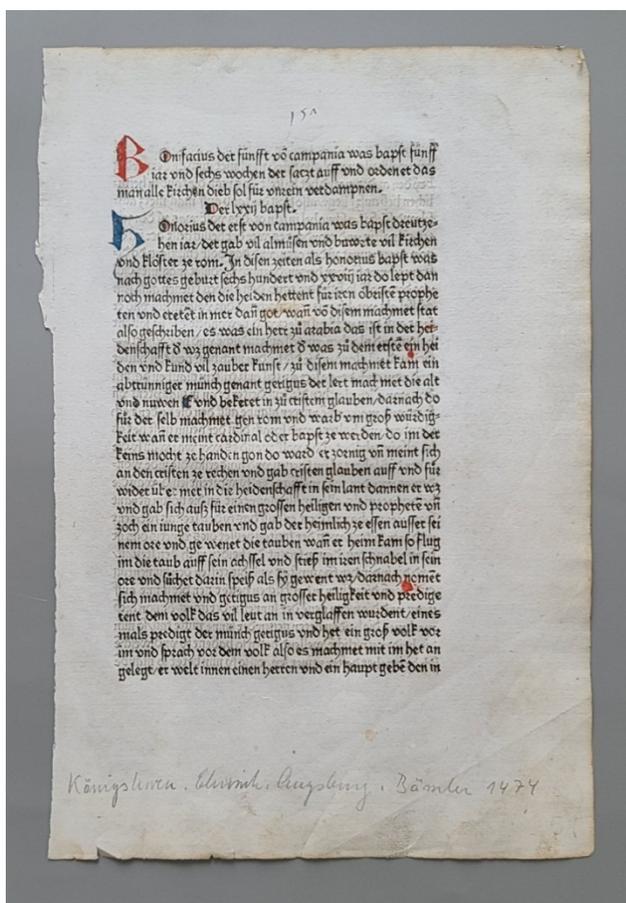


Fig. 2. Incunable leaf attributed to Königshofen, printed in Augsburg in 1474

Finally, the third of the rarest items is a book bound as a convolute, finalized in 1526, containing two works: Quintus Curtius Rufus, *De rebus gestis Alexandri Magni*. Basel: Johann Froben, 1518 (Quintus Curtius Rufus, 1518; Figure 3) and Paulus Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos libri VII*. Basel: Eucharius Cervicornus, 1526 (Paulus Orosius, 1526; Figure 4).

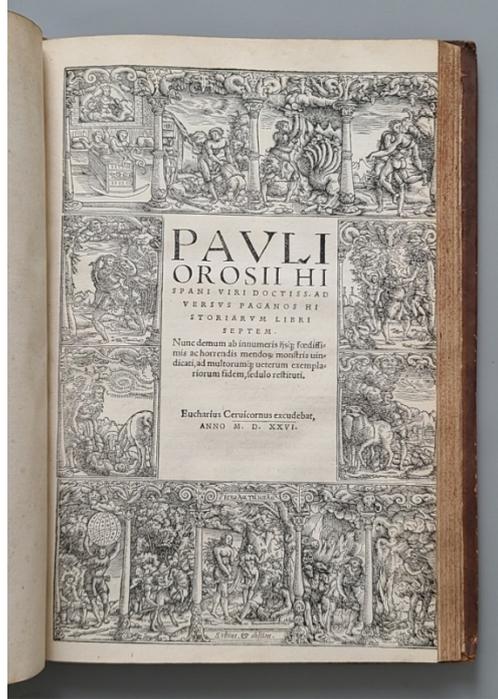
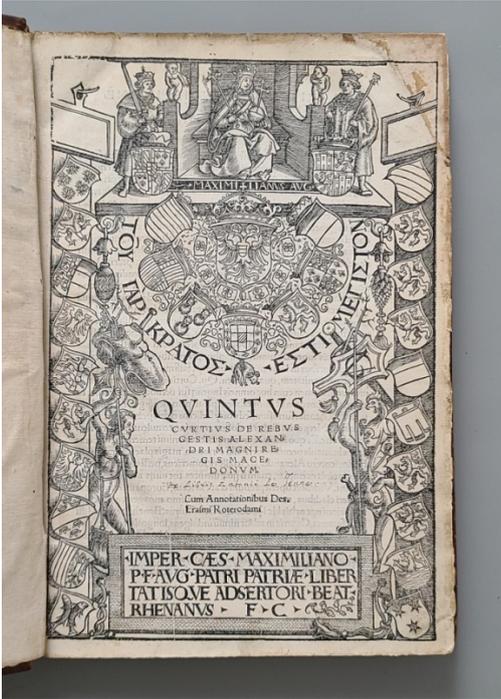


Fig. 3. *De rebus gestis Alexandri Magni* (1518).

Fig. 4. *Historiarum adversus paganos libri VII* (1526).

#### 4.2. Editions of 1541–1699

This section includes three books.

The first is Dominicus de Soto, *De natura et gratia* (Dominicus de Soto, 1570), published in Salmanticae in 1570 (Figure 5). This book is an example of classical Counter-Reformation Catholic theology; its author was an advisor to Emperor Charles V and one of the formulators of Catholic teaching on justification.

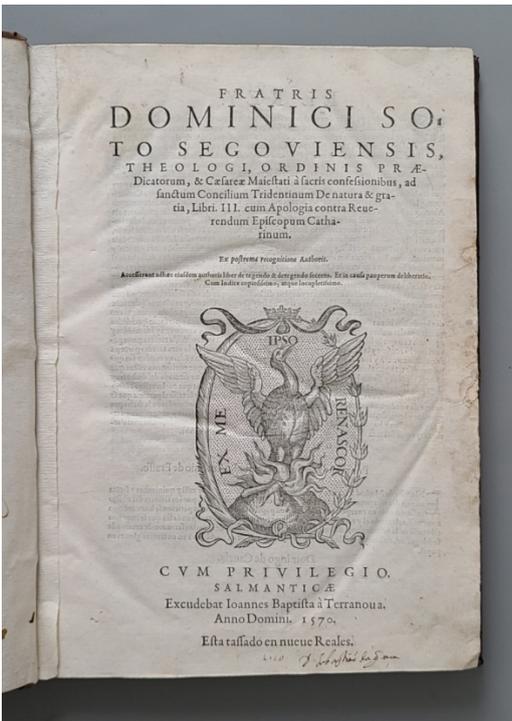
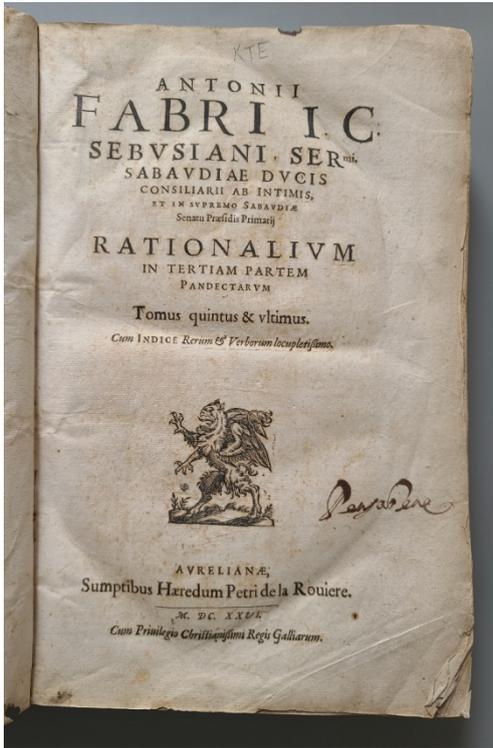


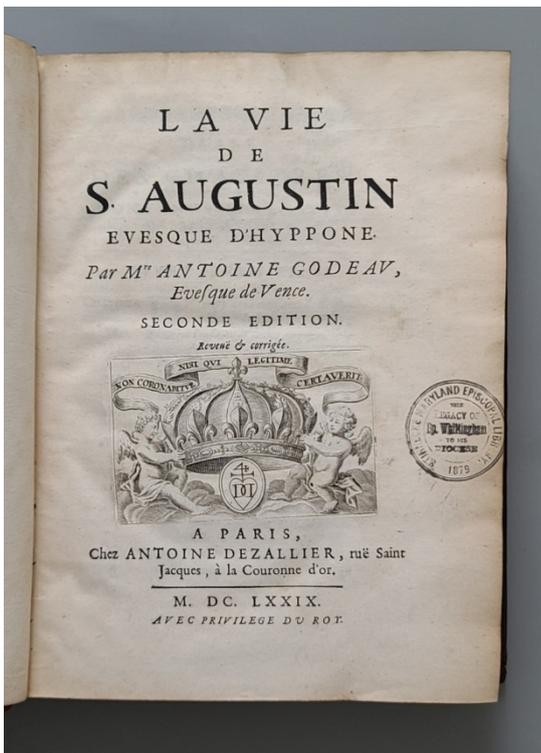
Fig. 5. Dominicus de Soto, *De natura et gratia* (1570)

The second is Antoine Fabri, *Rationalium in tertiam partem Pandectarum* (Fabri, 1626), Volume V (final) (Figure 6), published in Aurelianae in 1626. This book is an early seventeenth-century legal treatise on Roman law, published in France. The author was one of the leading European jurists of late humanism, an advisor to the Duke of Savoy, and president of Savoy's highest court.



**Fig. 6.** Antoine Fabri, *Rationalium in tertiam partem Pandectarum* (1626)

The third is a French-language book, Antoine Godeau, *La Vie de S. Augustin* (Godeau, 1679; Figure 7), published in Paris in 1679. The author of this work on the life of Saint Augustine was Antoine Godeau (1605–1672), Bishop of Vence, poet, and theologian.

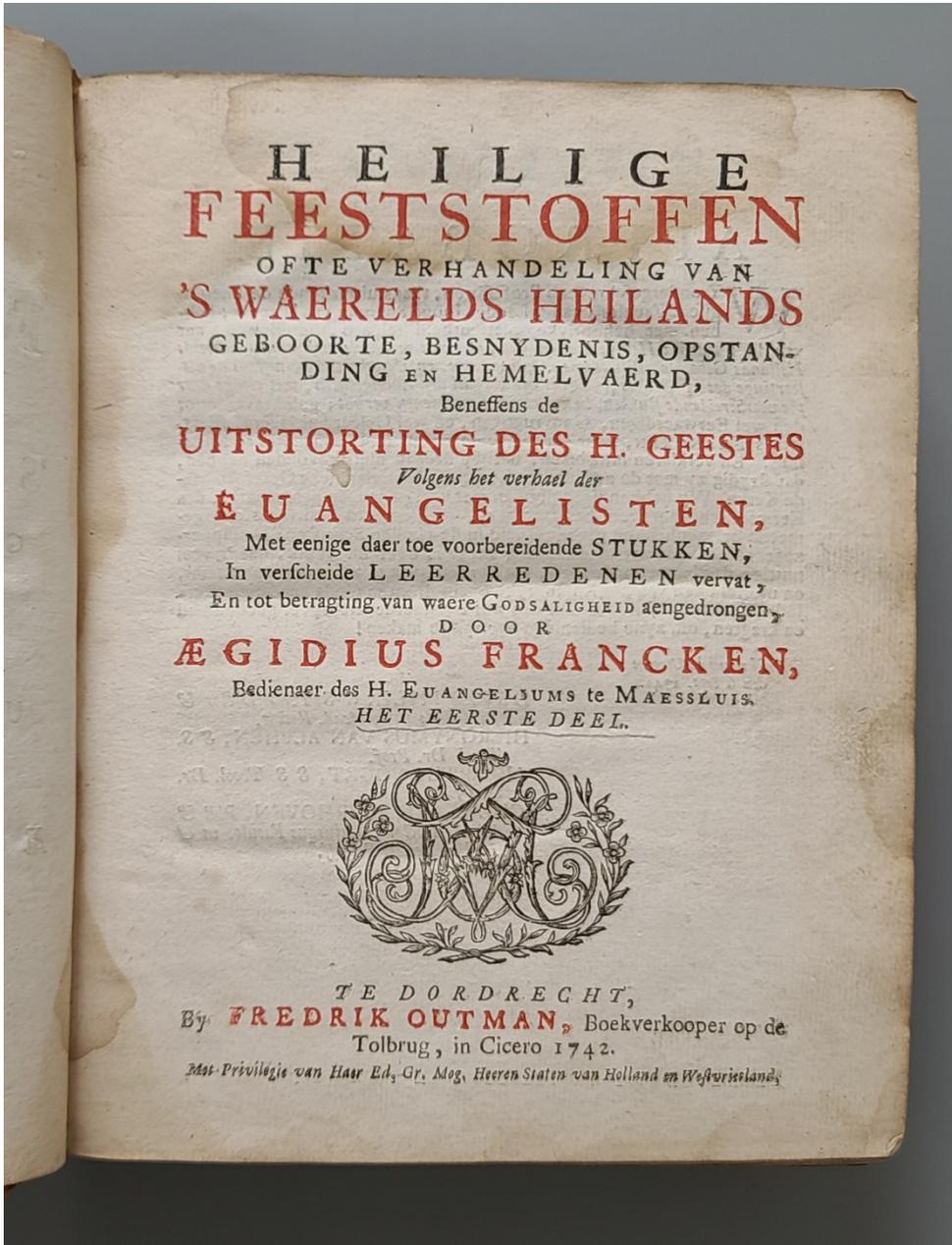


**Fig. 7.** Antoine Godeau, *La Vie de S. Augustin* (1679)

### 4.3. Editions of 1700–1799

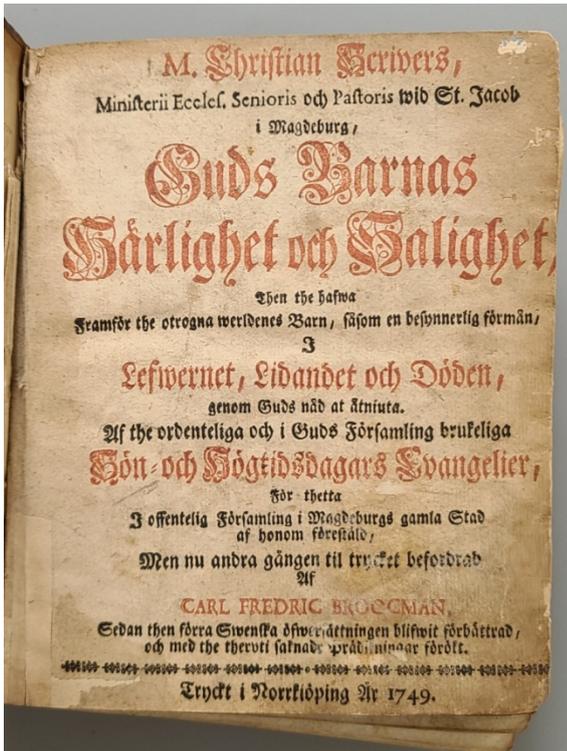
Among the five books published in this period, two belong to the first half of the eighteenth century, while three belong to the second half.

The earliest is Aegidius Francken, *Heilige Feeststoffen* (Francken, 1742), published in Dordrecht in 1742 (Figure 8). The author was a Reformed preacher and minister of the Gospel in Maassluis. By genre, the book belongs to Protestant homiletics (a collection of sermons) and is affiliated with the Dutch Reformed Church.



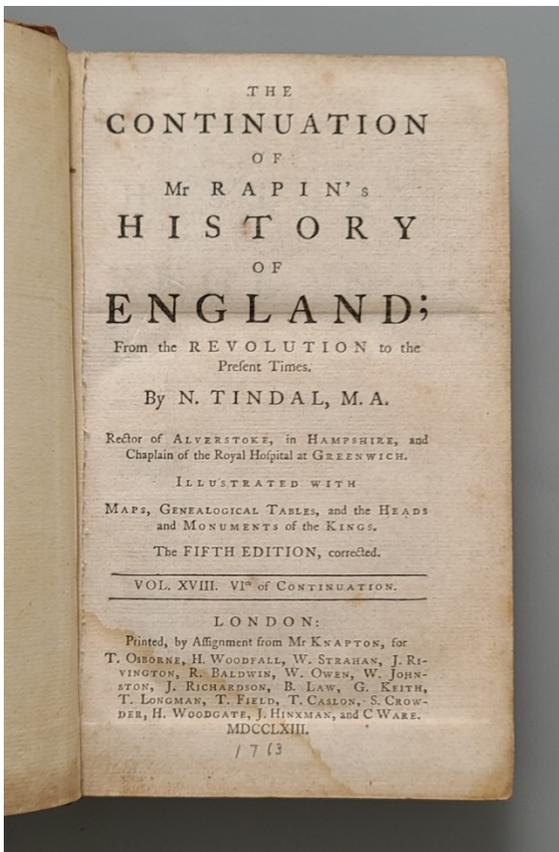
**Fig. 8.** Aegidius Francken, *Heilige Feeststoffen* (1742)

The next is an eighteenth-century Swedish Lutheran sermon book: Christian Scriver, *Guds Barnas Härlighet och Salighet* (Scriver, 1749), published in Norrköping in 1749 (Figure 9). The author, Christian Scriver/Christianus Scriverus (1629–1693), was a well-known Lutheran theologian and preacher from Magdeburg. By genre, the book also belongs to Lutheran homiletics (a collection of sermons).



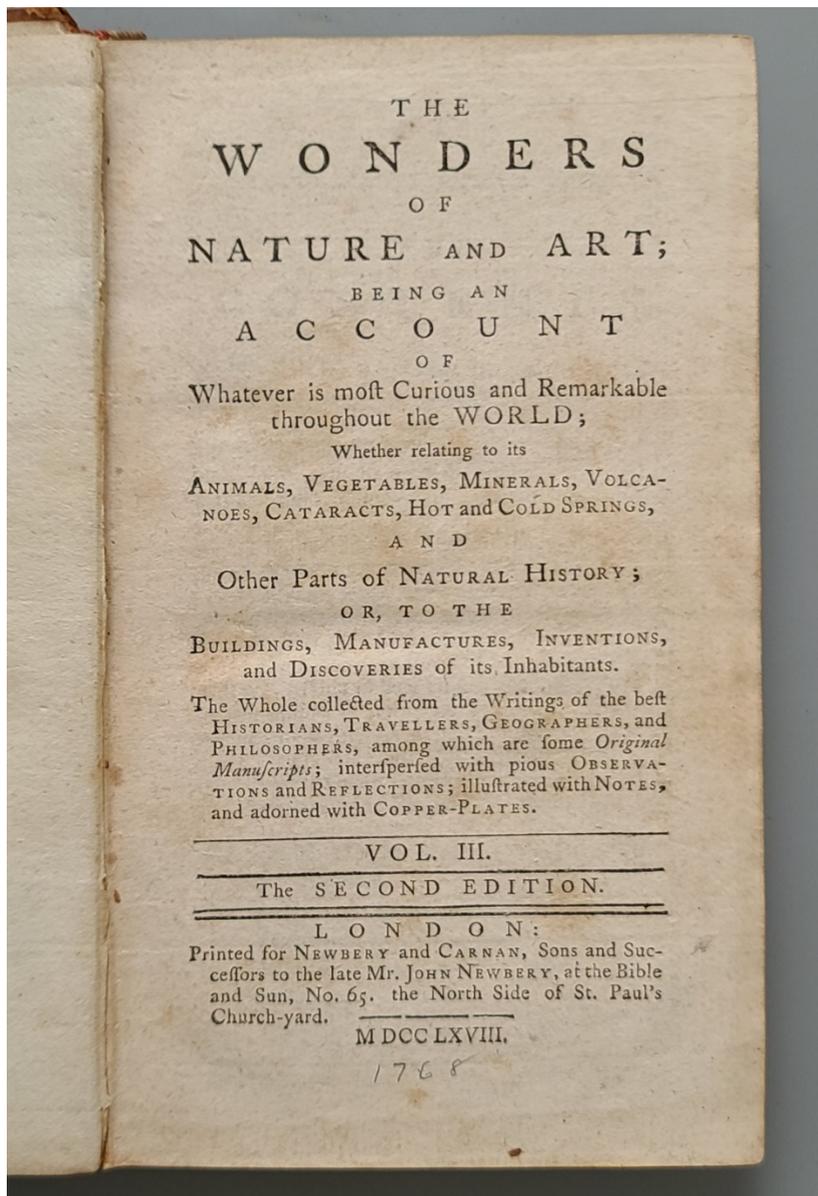
**Fig. 9.** Christian Scriver, *Guds Barnas Härlighet och Salighet* (1749)

The next is Nicholas Tindal, *The Continuation of Mr Rapin's History of England* (Tindal, 1763), published in London in 1763 (Figure 10). The author served as Rector of Alverstoke and chaplain of the Royal Hospital at Greenwich. The volume is Vol. XVIII, VIth of Continuation, part of the multi-volume *History of England*, one of the most authoritative historical works of the eighteenth century.



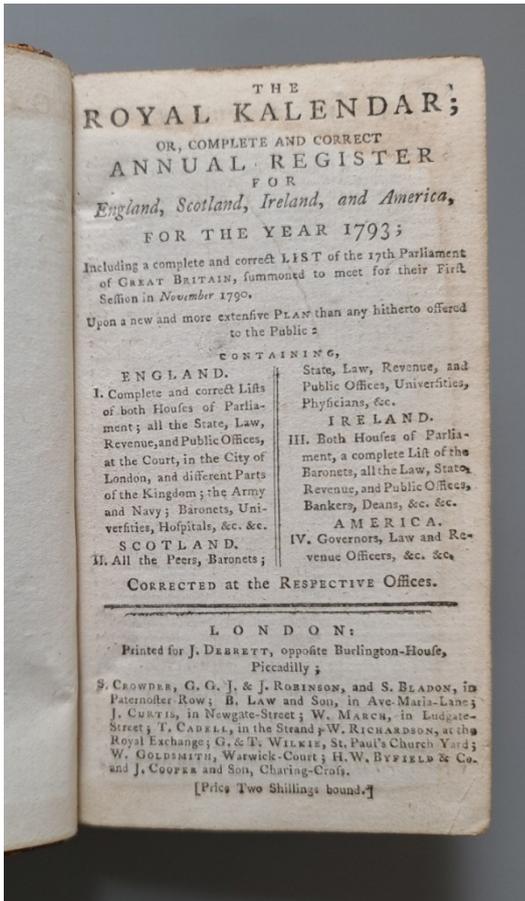
**Fig. 10.** Nicholas Tindal, *The Continuation of Mr Rapin's History of England* (1763)

Another book in this section is John Platt, *The Wonders of Nature and Art* (Platt, 1768), published in London in 1768 (Figure 11). This is an English encyclopedic publication of the Enlightenment era devoted to natural history and “wonders of the world.” It belongs to the genre of popular science (natural history) and compiles information from the works of historians, travelers, geographers, and philosophers.



**Fig. 11.** John Platt, *The Wonders of Nature and Art* (1768)

The final book in this section is the directory *The Royal Kalendar* (The Royal Kalendar, 1793), published in London in 1793 (Figure 12). *The Royal Kalendar* was one of the key administrative and political reference books of the British Empire in the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries. It included information on the members of the 17th Parliament of Great Britain (convened in 1790), as well as lists of both Houses of Parliament; state, judicial, and financial institutions; the army and navy; baronets and peers; universities and hospitals; clergy, physicians, bankers, and others. The directory was intended for England, Scotland, Ireland, and America.

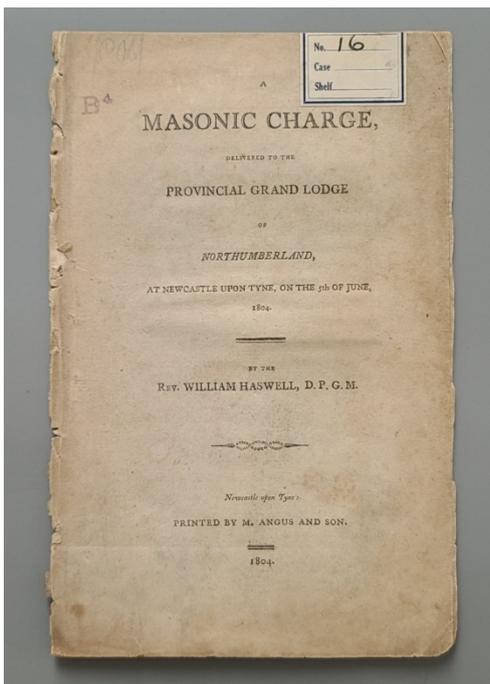


**Fig. 12.** *The Royal Kalendar* (1793)

#### 4.4. Editions of 1800–1836

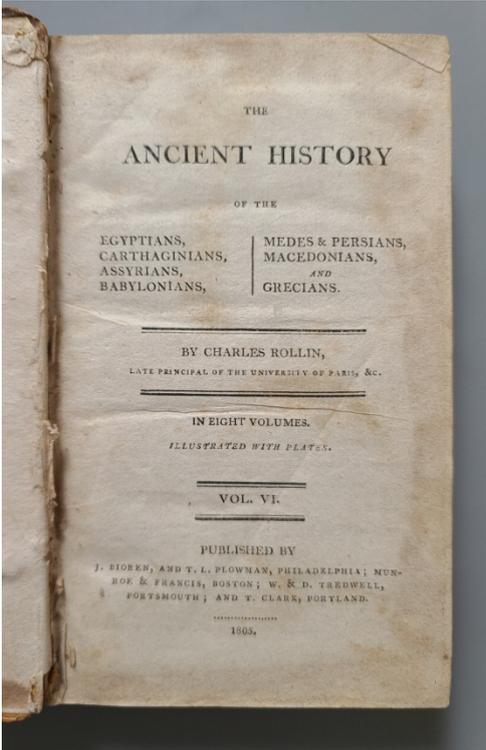
Publications from this period are the most numerous in the library.

The earliest is the pamphlet William Haswell, *Masonic Charge* (Haswell, 1804), published in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1804 (Figure 13). The author was a Deputy Provincial Grand Master, and the brochure prints his address delivered on June 5, 1804, to the Provincial Grand Lodge of Northumberland.



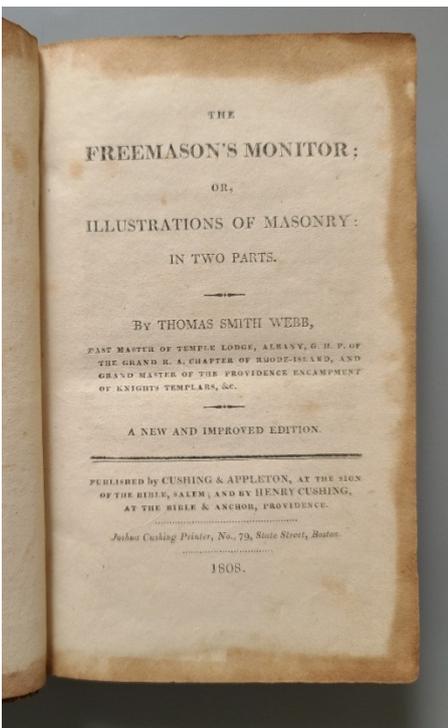
**Fig. 13.** William Haswell, *Masonic Charge* (1804)

The next work is Charles Rollin, *The Ancient History* (Rollin, 1805), Vol. VI (Figure 14), published in the United States in 1805. The author was a French historian and educator and former head (principal) of the University of Paris. The work covers the history of ancient civilizations: Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians, and Greeks.



**Fig. 14.** Charles Rollin, *The Ancient History* (1805)

The next edition is Thomas Smith Webb, *The Freemason's Monitor; or Illustrations of Masonry* (Webb, 1808), published in Boston in 1808 (Figure 15). This book is the fourth lifetime edition of the founder of the York Rite in American Freemasonry and is a bibliographical rarity.



**Fig. 15.** Thomas Smith Webb, *The Freemason's Monitor; or Illustrations of Masonry* (1808)

Another item is a unique book—a collection of Cicero’s speeches with parallel Latin text and English translation. The translator and commentator was William Duncan. The work, titled *Cicero’s Select Orations* (Duncan, 1811), was published in New Haven in 1811 (Fig. 16). Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it belonged to a prominent American politician Benjamin Brown French (1800–1870). The book was acquired in Australia.

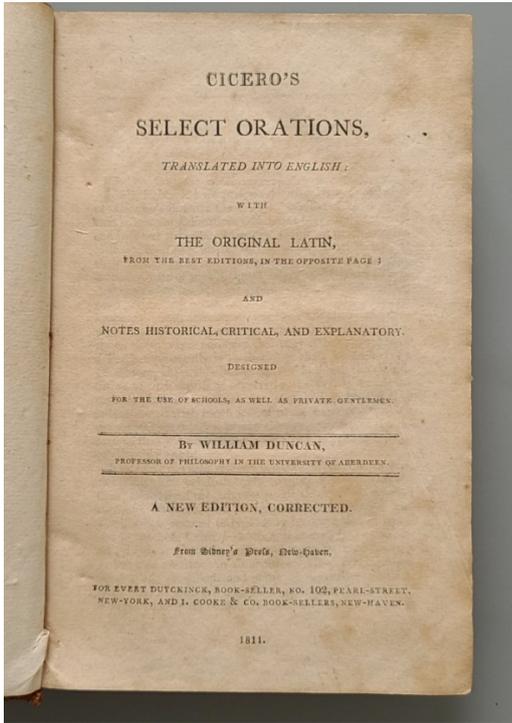
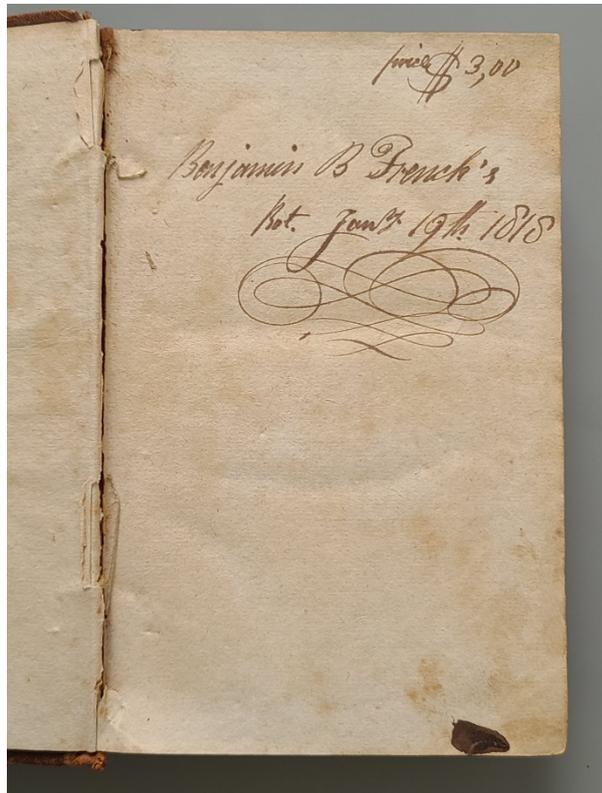
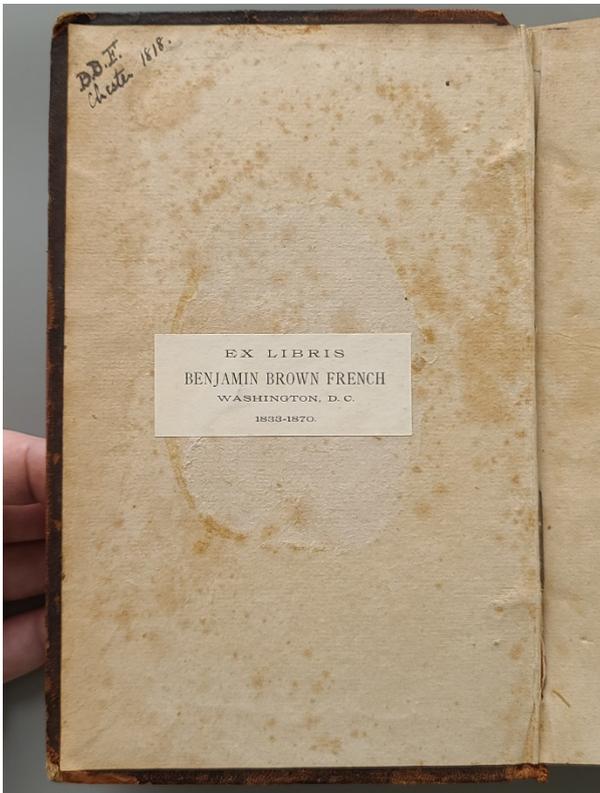


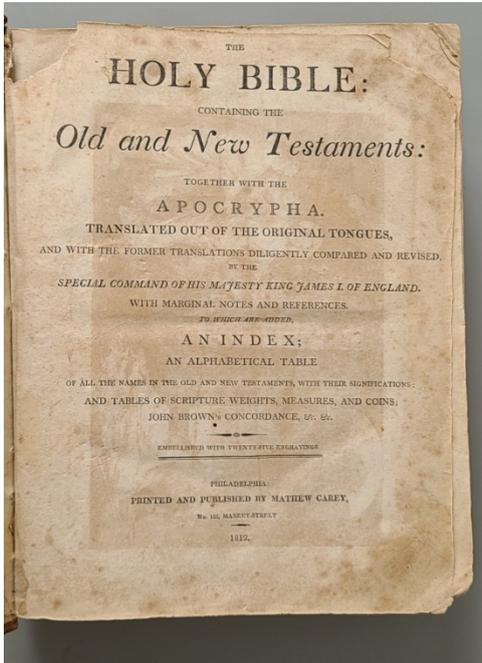
Fig. 16. William Duncan, *Cicero’s Select Orations* (1811)

The provenance of the book (its association with Benjamin Brown French) is confirmed by authentic bookplates (Figures 17–18).



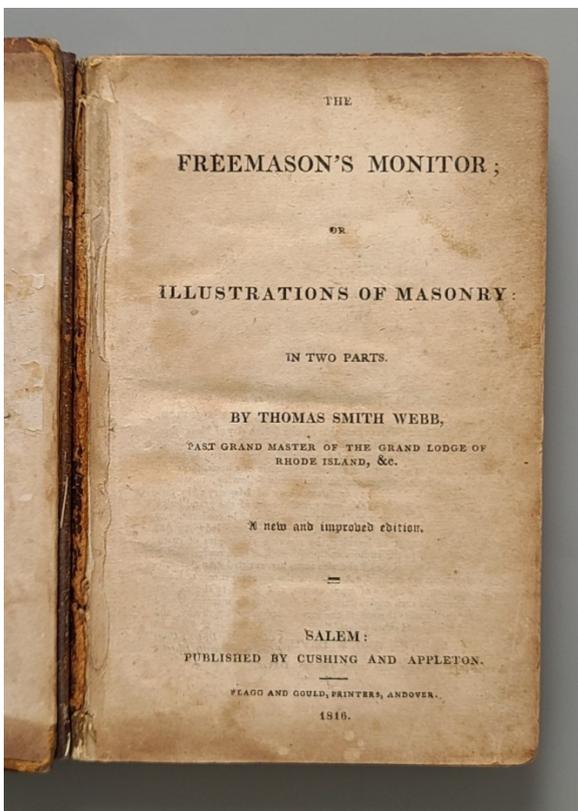
Figs. 17–18. *Ex Libris* of Benjamin Brown French, dated January 19, 1818

The next item is an American edition of the early nineteenth-century Bible – the so-called King James Bible. The book *The Holy Bible* ([The Holy Bible, 1812](#)) was published in Philadelphia in 1812 ([Figure 19](#)). This book is permanently displayed on the eastern side of the Museum of the History of the American Order of Knights Templar.



**Fig. 19.** *The Holy Bible* (1812)

The next edition is Thomas Smith Webb, *The Freemason's Monitor; or Illustrations of Masonry* ([Webb, 1816](#)), published in Salem in 1816 ([Figure 20](#)). This is the fifth lifetime edition of the founder of the York Rite in American Freemasonry and is also a bibliographical rarity.



**Fig. 20.** Thomas Smith Webb, *The Freemason's Monitor; or Illustrations of Masonry* (1816)

The next works are the two-volume memoirs Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744–1817), *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth* (Edgeworth, 1820; Edgeworth, 1820a), published in London in 1820 (Figures 21–22). The author was an Irish-English philosopher, educator, inventor, and participant in the intellectual milieu of the Enlightenment. The memoirs are among the most important sources for the intellectual history of Britain at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

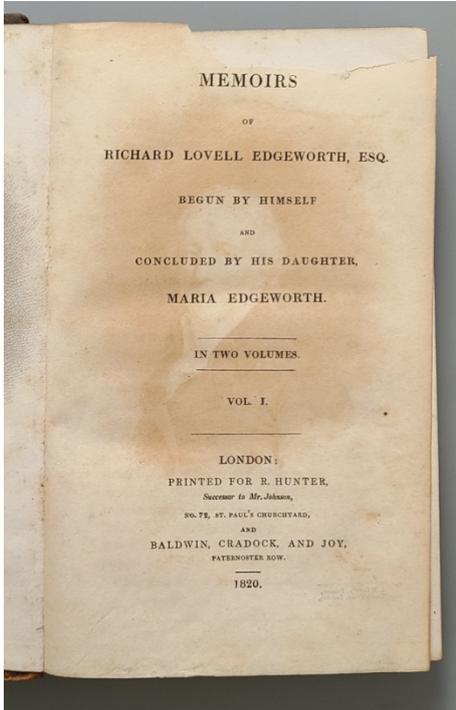


Fig. 21. Vol. 1 (1820).

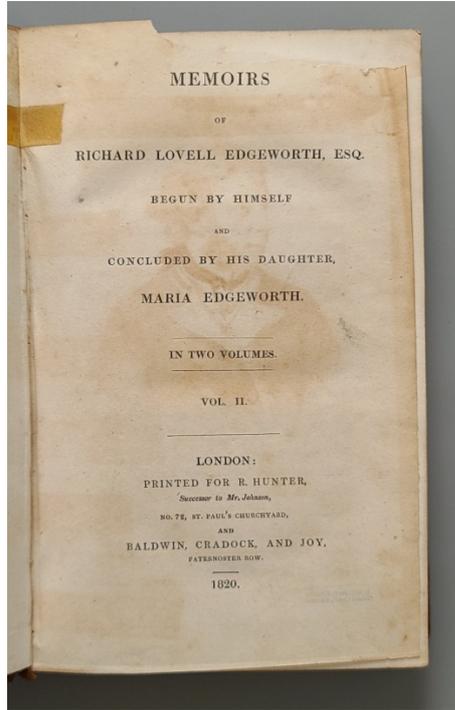


Fig. 22. Vol. 2 (1820).

The next work is Edward Baines, *History of the Wars of the French Revolution* (Baines, 1823), published in Philadelphia in 1823. The work was issued in four volumes; the library holds Volume 1 (Figure 23). This book was one of the early English-language syntheses of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars and was widely used in the United States as a reference and educational publication.

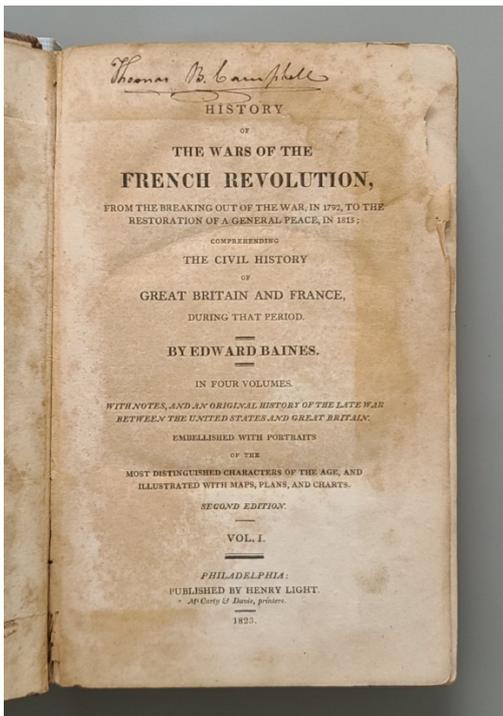
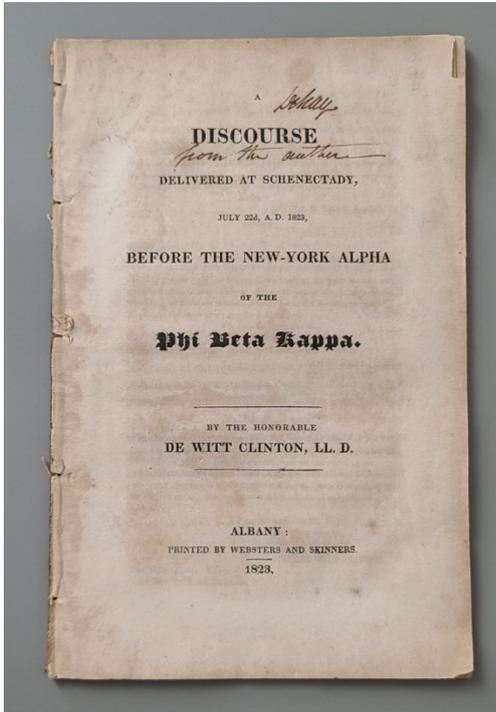


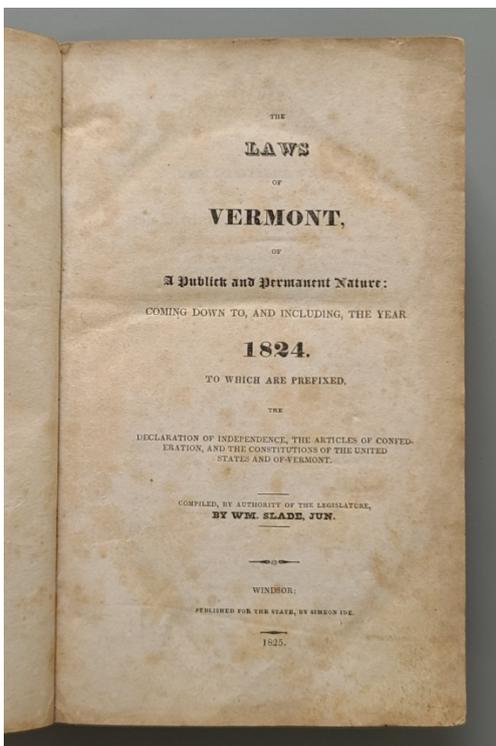
Fig. 23. Edward Baines, *History of the Wars of the French Revolution* (1823)

The next edition is an American printed address (pamphlet) of 1823, delivered before the student society Phi Beta Kappa by the well-known American politician De Witt Clinton (1769–1828), Governor of New York and initiator of the Erie Canal. The work is titled *A Discourse delivered at Schenectady* (Clinton, 1823) and was published in Albany in 1823 (Figure 24).



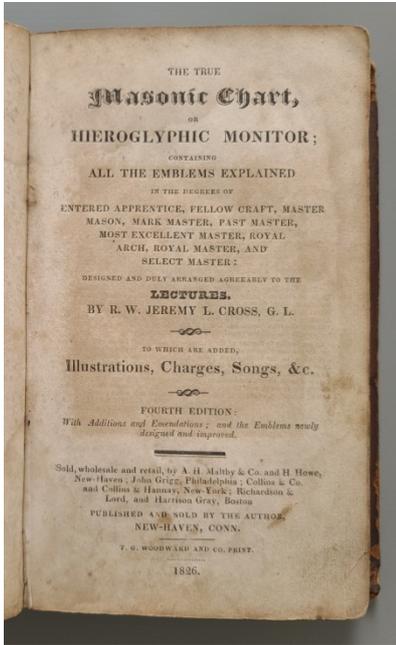
**Fig. 24.** De Witt Clinton, *A Discourse delivered at Schenectady* (1823)

The next item is the official compilation of the laws of the State of Vermont: *The Laws of Vermont* (*The Laws of Vermont, 1825*), compiled by William Slade Jr. and published in Windsor in 1825 (Figure 25). The volume includes acts issued through 1824.



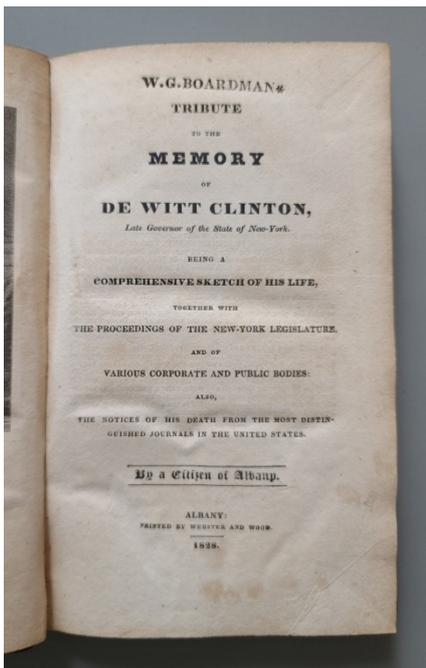
**Fig. 25.** *The Laws of Vermont* (1825)

The next book is Jeremy L. Cross, *The True Masonic Chart; or Hieroglyphic Monitor* (Cross, 1826), published in New Haven in 1826 (Figure 26). The author was a Past Grand Lecturer. The book was one of the key American Masonic “monitors” of the 1820s. It explains the emblems and symbols of Masonic degrees: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master Mason, Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, Royal Arch, Royal Master, Select Master. It includes illustrations, charges, songs, and other materials arranged “in accordance with the lectures.”



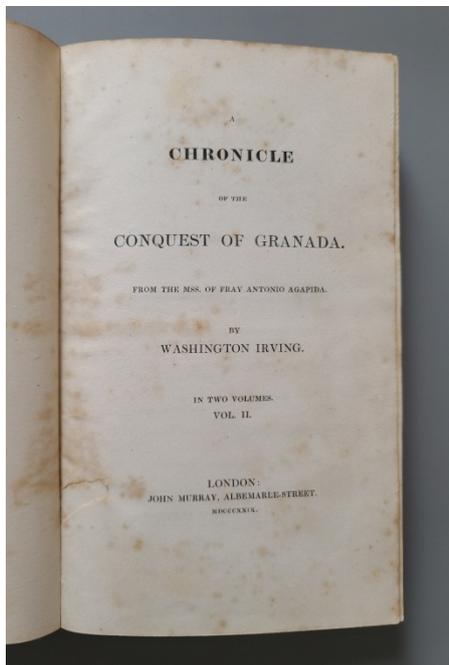
**Fig. 26.** Jeremy L. Cross, *The True Masonic Chart; or Hieroglyphic Monitor* (1826)

Another item in the rare collection is the memorial-biographical publication W. G. Boardman’s *Tribute to the Memory of De Witt Clinton* (Citizen of Albany, 1828), published in 1828 and dedicated to the memory of De Witt Clinton (Figure 27). The author is indicated as W.G. Boardman, described on the title page as “By a Citizen of Albany.” The book includes a substantial biographical essay on De Witt Clinton; materials from sessions of the New York legislature; responses from corporate and public organizations; and obituaries and death notices from leading American journals and newspapers. By genre, it is a memorial collection published shortly after Clinton’s death in 1828.



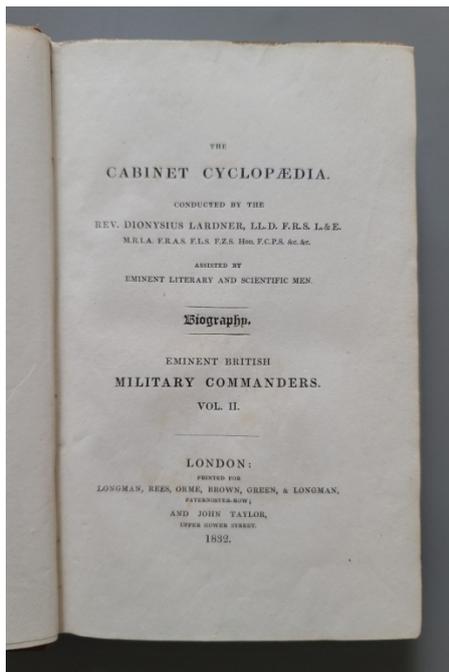
**Fig. 27.** W.G. Boardman’s *Tribute to the Memory of De Witt Clinton* (1828)

The next book is Washington Irving, *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (Irving, 1829), in two volumes; the library holds Vol. II (Figure 28), published in London in 1829. The work is devoted to the conquest of the Emirate of Granada (1482–1492), the final stage of the Reconquista in Spain. Irving combines historical sources, chronicle style, and literary narrative. The book is not a dry chronicle but a historical narrative that strongly influenced the Romantic perception of medieval Spain in the English-speaking world.



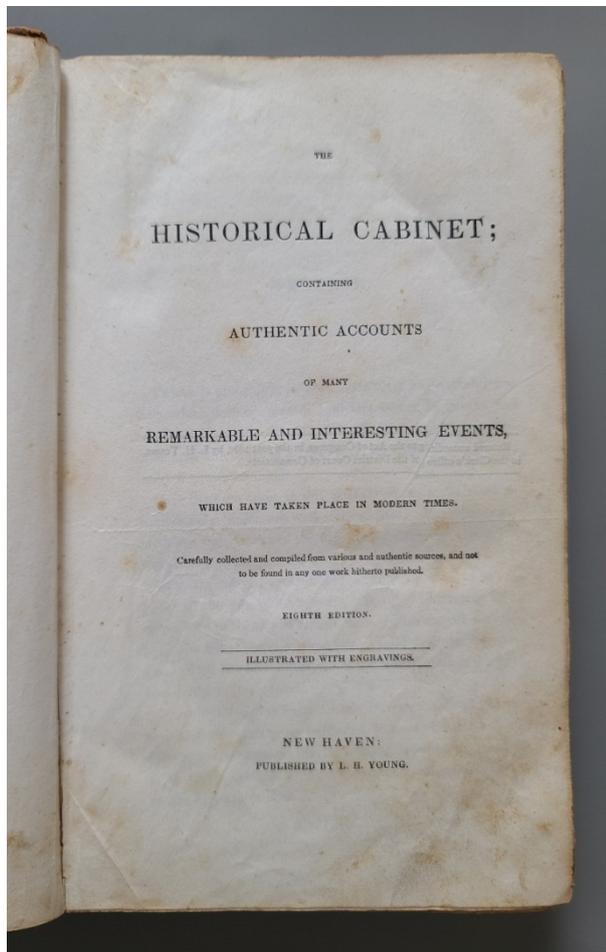
**Fig. 28.** Washington Irving, *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829)

The next item is Volume II of the encyclopedic series *The Cabinet Cyclopædia* (*The Cabinet Cyclopædia*, 1832), devoted to biographies of British military commanders. The volume was published in London in 1832 (Figure 29). *The Cabinet Cyclopædia* is one of the most authoritative British encyclopedic series of the first half of the nineteenth century. Biographical volumes, including this one, were used in universities, military educational institutions, and for home education. The book is valuable for the study of British military history, prosopography, and the intellectual culture of the era.



**Fig. 29.** *The Cabinet Cyclopædia* (1832)

The last book in the rare collection is *The Historical Cabinet* ([The Historical Cabinet, 1834](#)) ([Figure 30](#)), a popular historical publication of the first half of the nineteenth century and an eighth edition of a compilation of narratives about notable events of “modern times.” The book was published in New Haven in 1834. It contains authentic accounts of remarkable and interesting events; the material is carefully compiled from reliable sources, includes narratives not previously published together in one volume, and is illustrated with engravings.



**Fig. 30.** *The Historical Cabinet* (1834)

## 5. Conclusion

The study of the rare collection of the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Library at Cherkas Global University makes it possible to regard it not only as a set of bibliophilic and historically valuable editions, but also as a coherent scholarly resource with substantial source-critical and library-science potential. Analysis of the collection shows that its chronological range (1455–1836) covers key stages in the development of European and North American print culture – from early printing and the humanist tradition to the Enlightenment and the formation of national intellectual traditions.

Structuring the collection by chronological and thematic principles has revealed the internal logic of the collection’s formation and its profile orientation related to the history of religion, law, philosophy, political thought, and Masonic organizations. The collection’s particular value lies in its incunabula and post-incunabula, early legal and theological treatises, and American editions of the early nineteenth century reflecting processes of cultural and political identity formation in the United States.

The application of a set of general scientific and specialized library-science methods has ensured the scholarly validity of the cataloguing and attribution of editions. Overall, the rare collection provides a foundation for further interdisciplinary research and may be востребовано both in academic contexts and in museum and educational projects devoted to the history of the book and the intellectual heritage of the early modern period.

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