

Organizing The Bibliothèque Nationale The First Time, c. 1530

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The way we arrange books in our libraries often indicates the way categorize our thoughts. The Library of Congress classification system, for example, mirrors late nineteenth-century American divisions of knowledge and our biases as well. Every pre-1900 American literary author can today be found under his or her own classification number (that is, to the left of the decimal), while entire subjects that have come into bibliographic existence since the turn of the century--computer science and all Latin American literatures, to name only those that come immediately to mind--are often grouped under the same classification number and can be differentiated in our libraries only by increasingly longer decimal cutters.

Medieval libraries also had their own peculiar organizing principles--or at least we assume they did. But this information rarely has come down to us. We are lucky to get an inventory of a collection, and luckier still if the manuscripts are grouped in a logical fashion in that inventory. It is unusual, however, to have any information about where books were actually *located* within a medieval library. The royal library of the château at Blois represents one of these unusual instances.

The library at Blois was established by Charles, duke of Orléans, after he was released from his English imprisonment in 1440. He brought many books with him from England and added these to the collection started by his grandfather, Charles V, and then considerably augmented by his father, Louis I, duke of Orléans. After the death of Charles, the Blésois library of about 300¹ titles passed to his son, Louis II, duke of Orléans, who in 1498 became Louis XII of France--at which point the collection at Blois became the royal library. Louis XII was also an active bibliophile, acquiring through legal and (let us be charitable) "other" means hundreds of manuscripts, swelling the collection to over 1600 items by the time of an inventory taken in 1518. The library thus remained and grew at Blois for over one hundred years, from 1440 until 1544, when Francis I, who inherited the collection after Louis XII's death in 1515, ordered the books transported to Fontainebleau. Later in the century the books were again moved, this time to Paris, to become the core of the Bibliothèque Royale, then Impériale, and today Nationale.

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Between Louis XII's ascent in 1498 and Francis I's decision to move the collection in 1544--and probably around 1530, for reasons to be given here--one of the Blésois librarians took each Volume from its place in the chateau's library and wrote quite specific shelving instruction within it. This information is today preserved, when it has been preserved, on a preliminary leaf or on a small piece of parchment or paper pasted inside the front cover. A typical entry reads: "C'est pour le roy. Des histoires et livres en françoys, pulpito 5^o, entre les première et seconde croysées, contre la muraille vers les fossez. Bloys." Whoever annotated these texts also specified other shelves (*pulpito / pulpistre*)² and locations within the room: "à la cheminée," "vers la cheminée," "contre la muraille (du couste) devers la court," "par terre devers les fossez," and "par terre (du couste) devers la court." Sometimes he named pieces of furniture that took on identities based on the texts they contained, as "aux armoyres dessoubz le pulpistre de la Chronique d'Angleterre." At other times he specified an area set aside for a certain language, for example, "des vulgaires italiens." These annotations apparently represent the first attempt to organize the rather large collection that Louis XII amassed quickly at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Although many of the shelving instructions have disappeared primarily through rebinding, enough remain to draw some provisional conclusions about the original organization of the royal library at Blois.

I have examined some 400 texts, most of them written in French, either indirectly through catalog descriptions (when they include shelving information) or directly through microfilms of manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Over

one-quarter of these still contain the shelving notices. My remarks will be limited to what conclusions can be drawn from the way this subset of texts was arranged on the shelves at Blois. To put my conclusion first: particular locations were devoted to particular subjects. The area "à la cheminée" was used for religious subjects, with the first shelf given largely to devotional matter, the second primarily to the vernacular hagiographic manuscripts at Blois, and the third to theology. In the section "contre la muraille (du couste) devers la court," the second shelf contained a cluster of literature titles, the third a high concentration of civil law texts, and the fourth most of the contemporary chronicles held at Blois, a number of philosophical texts, and at least three copies of Brunetto Latini's *Trésor*. In the section "par terre devers les fossez," the first shelf held religious history. In the section "par terre (du couste) devers la court," the second shelf held secular history. An entire section of five shelves "entre les première et seconde croysées, contre la muraille vers les fossez" was devoted to Arthurian works. The data to support these conclusions appear in a table below. Of course not everything was tidy- -some shelves contained items that (to me) seem unrelated to the "subject" of a shelf, while in

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other cases I have not been able to gather enough data to draw any conclusion about the genre of a particular shelf-- but sufficient order does exist in the data that can be gathered from extant shelving instructions to realize that there was undoubtedly an organizing principle at Blois, and that in some ways this principle parallels our own "modern" method of categorizing knowledge generically.

Although the château still stands, the room that once contained the library no longer exists. One can nonetheless locate the library rather precisely by the shelving instructions' references to "la court" and "les fossez," and then overlaying these on sixteenth-century drawings of the château that indicate the physical terrain around it. Through a process of triangulation and elimination we may place the library to the southwest of the still-standing Chapelle Saint-Calais. The library was part of a small complex of buildings which served as the treasury. This complex contained the chateau's accounts, the vestments of the priests who served at Blois, and a library that must have grown by a factor of three to five during Louis XII's reign of acquisition. These buildings were destroyed in the early seventeenth century by Gaston, duke of Orléans, when he rebuilt the entire southwest wing of the chateau.³ But by this time the royal library had long since left Blois.

The contents of the Blois library can be reconstructed from copies of two sixteenth-century inventories of the collection. The first, date 1518, was written by Guillaume Petit (or Parvy), the chaplain and librarian at Blois. Although his original inventory has vanished, a deluxe copy has been preserved in the Nationalbibliothek at Vienna.⁴ Petit's preface tells us how he organizes the catalog: "S'ensuit le repertoire, selon l'ordre de l'alphabet, de tous les livres, Volumes et traittez en francoys, italien et espagnol, couvers de veloux et non couvers, de la librarie du très chrestien roy de France, Francoys."⁵ If one wants to discover how texts were shelved, an alphabetical listing of a library's holdings is not too promising a start--unless, of course, Volumes were shelved in alphabetical order. This seems unlikely. The section of the Vienna inventory certainly Petit's work--that dealing with 404 items written primarily in French, with an occasional cluster of Latin and Italian items⁶--contains a total of six separate lists. Only the first of these lists, of 255 French items, is arranged alphabetically. Yet there are another sixty-seven items, described as "petitz livres et traittez en francoys ... aux armoires soubz le pulpitre de la Cronicque de Angleterre et de la Toison," which Petit lists in no apparent order; twenty items grouped together because they occupy "ung coffre carré de boy de sapin," again in no order; thirty-four randomly listed items, most in

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Latin, in another armoire, this one "soubz le pulpitre où sont Tite Live, Va[le]re, le Commentaire de Cesar, [et] le Recueil des Histoires;" ten items grouped together because they are Italian; and another eighteen items, again listed in no particular order, separated from others in the inventory because the king usually carried them with him wherever he went--his youthful tastes, we might note, leaned toward chronicle, history, and romance. Either Petit failed to catalog the Spanish texts he mentions in his preface or, more likely, they were for some reason excluded when the Vienna manuscript was made.⁷

Following these six lists, comprising 404 items, there are another 1222 titles, in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic. Latin texts naturally occupy the greatest part of this section of the inventory. This latter section deals carefully with items Petit does not even mention in his preface, and is therefore apparently not his work. Nor does this latter part

follow Petit's practice: these items have actually been organized into something approaching subject divisions. At the very least, the 1222 items have been arranged *differently* from the 404 preceding them, because these non-vernacular works are rationalized under a dozen subject headings, subdivided into velvet and nonvelvet bindings under each heading, include cross-references for Volumes containing multiple treatises, and are better alphabetized.⁸

It is difficult to say definitively that an inventory is random; after all, perhaps we simply fail to see the logic behind Petit's five nonalphabetical lists (items 256-404). I have, however, been able to determine what does not organize these lists. (1) Subject. In one armoire, for example, one finds farces, romances, devotional books, devotional songs, rhetorical treatises, chronicles, and 80 on. Subject does not tie them together. (2) Size. Small Volumes and large are mixed together, with the exception of the armoire Petit describes as containing "petitz livres et traittiez." When I have been able to identify the Volumes Petit lists, I have found that they are octavo-, quarto-, and regular folio-size. This armoire contains no oversize folios. (3) Binding. Although Petit's preface promises to distinguish between velvet and non-velvet bindings [by which he usually means leather, though sometimes silk or wood], velvet and leather bindings are certainly mixed in four of the nonalphabetical ⁹ lists and were apparently mixed on the shelves as well. The result of indiscriminate shelving perhaps appears in some marginal annotations in a later inventory: "Veloux tout pelid and deschiré"¹⁰-which is just what happens when the metal closures of a leather-bound book rake across the boards of a velvet-covered one. (4) Color. Once again, no help. Blue, red, yellow, and black velvet and silk bindings are mixed with leather and wood covers of varied color. The desire for shelf after shelf of matched bindings arises during the era of Louis XIV. (5) Provenance. Louis XII would often acquire many Volumes at a time--notably the

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library of the Visconti-Sforza family in Pavia and that of Louis of Bruges. I wondered at one point if he attempted to keep intact those collections he acquired. Apparently not. Those acquisitions that he made around 1500--and I have in mind the 150 or so Volumes that he acquired from Louis of Bruges's estate ¹¹--were spread throughout the library's boxes and armoires (and presumably shelves, too) by the time of Petit's 1518 inventory. (6) Language. Obviously the Italian books, and by analogy probably the Spanish ones, too, were set aside to keep them away from the Volumes likely to be used more regularly. But separation by language actually "separates" when at most a few dozen Volumes are involved. It is a matter less of organization than bibliographic exile for the Italian and Spanish texts. (7) Value. The cedar box contains some of the most precious manuscripts in the royal library: the *Grandes Heures* of Jean, duke of Berry, a beautifully illustrated French translation of Petrarch's *Trionfi*, books encrusted with jewels, enamels, and multiple gold and silver clasps, and so on. But this one cedar box for valuable books and the armoire for small books aside, the other nonalphabetical lists reflect little organizing principle at all. What they probably do reflect, however, is the actual organization--and we must use the term loosely--of the books at Blois around 1518. Just how those 255 alphabetically listed French books were arranged on the shelves at this date, as well as how the 1222 predominantly Latin items were arranged, remains an open question, but judging from the lists that we can analyze, it seems doubtful that Petit's library was in good order.

A letter written in 1531 by Marguerite of Angoulême, queen of Navarre, mentions in passing that another inventory was composed around that time by the great scholar and theologian Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, who succeeded Petit as the Blésois librarian. She says that "Le bonhomme Fabry m'a escript qu'il s'est trouvé ung peu mal à Bloys ... Il a mis en ordre sa librairie, cotté les livres et mis tout par inventaire, lequel il baillera à qui il plaira au Roy."¹² Henri Omont speculated that it is a copy of Lefèvre d'Étaples's catalog of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic books that we find appended to Petit's catalog of vernacular texts in the Vienna manuscript,¹³ and this seems a reasonable assumption to me. To Lefèvre d'Étaples I would also attribute the shelving instructions that we still find today in some of the Volumes. The man who undertakes to number and organize some 1600 items is sufficiently cautious to annotate each Volume so that lesser mortals cannot easily disturb his well ordered bibliographic cosmos. In fact Marguerite's reference to Lefèvre's having "cotté les livres" must mean the addition of the shelving instructions themselves, because there are no "numbers" anywhere on extant Bibliothèque Nationale manuscripts that could possibly be traced to the work of Lefèvre d'Étaples.¹⁴

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Regardless of who annotated the texts, the annotations do reflect an early attempt to organize the Blésois collection. I present below a list of those Volumes that I know of which still contain shelving instructions. This does not pretend to

be a complete inventory of all texts in the Bibliothèque Nationale which contain such instructions--that is something I wish I knew. Rather, my project has been more limited. I have taken the first 404 items of the 1518 inventory, assigned these items when possible to extant Volumes, and then recorded the shelving instructions whenever they have survived.¹⁵ The result: a shelflist of 121 Volumes on twenty shelves in seven locations, and in one armoire, in the library at Blois.

Shelving Arrangement at Blois, circa 1530

1. "à la cheminée"

Pulpito I

Ms. 190 1. Jean de Gerson, Le Truant, ou Le Secret Parlement de l'homme contemplatif à son àme ¹⁶

2. Livre de contemplation

3. Bonaventure, Devotions ordonnez

4. Seneca, Dcs quatre vertus principaulz

5. Ung petit traité de moralité de philozophie

6. Instruction pour entendre la messe

MS. 449 Des douze perilz d'Enfer

MS. 188 Le Miroir de l'umaine saulvation

MS. 1837 Le Penitence Adam

MS. 998 Le Retour du cuer perdu

MS. 961 Du crisme de vauderie

Pulpito 2

MS. 155 Pierre Le Mangeur, La Bible historians, ou Les Histoires escolastres

MS. 911 1. L'Ystoire en brief, prinse sur le dyalogue saint Gregoire

2. Recueil d'exemples moraux

MS. 1021 Fleurs de toutes vertuz

MS. 241 1. Jacobus de Voragine, La Légende des sains [Légende dorée]

2. L'Epistre saint Beneoit & Remon, arcevesque de Coulongne: Du Martire des Machabées

MS. 414 Jacobus de Voragine, La Legende dorée

MS. 453 Jacques Le Grant, Des bonnes meurs

MS. 953 Jacques Le Grant, Des bonnes meurs

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MS. 993 Dionysius the Carthusian, Des qualtre desrenières choses qui sont à advenir

MS. 1040 1. Frère Laurent, Le Mirouer du monde, ou Le Somme le roi

2. La Vie de ... saint Denis

MS. 1048 Raymond de Capouc, La Légende saincte Katherine de Seyne

MS. 1038 1. La Vie des sainz Péres

2. Les Voiages que saint Antoine fist en la terre d'outremer

3. St. John of Damascus, L'Estoire de Balaam et de Josaph[a]t

4. L'Avenement Antecrist

5. Si comme Nostre Sires vendra jugier le monde

6. L'Asumptom Nostre Dame

7. Recette "ffor to makin aqua vite"

MS. 4976 La Vie et miracles de saint Loys

MS. 1043 1. Peains Gatineaus La Vie [de] ... saint Martin de Tors

2. Peains Gatineaus Liber sancti Gregorii Turonensis, de transitu beati Martini

3. Peains Gatineaus, Liber Heberti ... ou, Miracles de saint

Martin

MS. 1792 Jacques Bauchans, Voies de Dieu, ou Visions de sainte Elizabeth

Pulpito 3

- MS. 403 Apocalipsis Cristi Jesu
- MS. 158 Pierre Le Mangeur, La Bible historians, ou Les Histoires escolastres (v. 2)
- MS. 897 La Bible moralizée
- MS. 169 Le Nouveau Testament, traduction avec glose de Guiart des Moulins
- MS. 907 1. Lectionnaire
- 2. Le Parlement de trahir Nostre Seigneur devant Pylate
- MS. 966 1. La Passion de Jesus-Christ
- 2. Les Lamentations saint Bernart
- MS. 970 1. L'Ystoire de la Passion Nostre Seigneur
- 2. Jean de Gerson, Ung très devot Sermon des trespassez
- 3. Jean de Gerson, Ung aultre Sennon des trespasés

- 4. Ung très devot Sermon du ... saint Anthoine
- MS. 181 1. De vita Christi
- 2. La Vengeance de la mort Nostre Seigneur

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II. "vers la cheminée"

Pulpito 1

[no entries]

Pulpito 2

[no entries]

Pulpito 3

Vélin 518 Le Kalendrier des bergiers

III. "contre la muraille (du couste) devers la court"

Pulpito 1

MS. 1479 Le Roman de Paris et Vienne

MS. 1505 1. Le livre du chevalier de La Tour, lequel il fist pour l'enseignement des femmes marides et A marier

2. Petrarch, Le Roman de Griselidis

3. La Légende de Placidus ou saint Eustache

4. Robert of Lincoln, L'Altercacion ou Disputacion d'entre l'ame et le corps

MS. 1594 Compilatio Ysopi Alatii cum Avinioneto, ...et La Compilation de Ysopet Avionnet

Ms. 1980 Jean de Villiers, Traité du gaige de bataille

MS. 5646 Guillaume Caoursin, Siège de Rhodes

MS. 139 Guillaume Fillastre, La Toison d'or (v. 1)

MS. 140 Guillaume Fillastre, La Toison d'or (v. 2)

MS. 2705 Inventoire gndral de tous les joyaulx ... du roy Charles leQuint

Pulpito 2

MS. 1226 Georges Chastellain, De plusieurs remonsuances selon le stile Jehan Bocace par manidre de consolation

MS. 239 Boccaccio, Decameron

V61in 607 Nef des folz

MS. 1462 Le Roman de la Rose, en prose

MS. 331 L'Istoire de la conquests du ... thoison d'or

MS. 1063 Justinian, Institutes

Pulpito 3

- MS. 496 Justinian, Code (v. 1)**
- MS. 497 Justinian, Code (v. 2)**
- MS. 495 Justinian (?), La Digeste vielle**
- MS. 493 Gregory IX, Les Decrétales**

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- MS. 5058 Justification de France conue l'Angleterre, du temps du roys Loys XI**
- MS. 1073 L'Ordinaire de ... Tancrez, qui traite comment toute personne se doit avoir en justice**
- MS. 5273 Ordonnances faictes par le roy de France, Charles VI**
- MS. 201 Jean Boutillier Somme rurale (v. 1)**
- MS. 202 Jean Boutillier Somme rurale (v. 2)**
- MS. 192 Jean de Bueil, Le Jouvencel**

Pulpito 4

- MS. 728 Commentaires de César**
- MS 2643 Froissart, Chroniques (v 1)**
- MS 2644 Froissart, Chroniques (v. 2)**
- MS. 2645 Froissart, Chroniques (v. 3)**
- MS 2646 Froissart, Chroniques (v. 4)**
- MS 2803 Jean de Becke, Chroniques de Hollande, de Zeelande et de Frise**
- MS. 2797 Les Anciennes Chroniques de Pise**
- MS. 2691 Jean Charetier, La Chronique du temps de ... roy Charles VII**
- MS. 1212 Le Livre au enseigne comment les roys se doivent gouverner**
- Ms. 562 1. Aristotle, Le Livre des Secrets**
- 2. Le Miroir de l'ame**
- Ms. 1085 Aristotle, Le Livre de Yconomiques**
- MS. 563 Aristotle, Le Livre des Probleumes**
- MS. 564 Aristotle, Le Livre des Probleumes**
- MS. 571 1. Brunetto Latini, Trésor**
- 2 Aristotle, Secré des secrez**
- 3 Deux Prières**
- 4. Deux Motets**
- 5. Le Dit de Fauveyne**
- Ms. 191 Brunetto Latini, Trésor**
- MS. 1110 Brunetto Latini, Trésor**
- MS. 212 Jean Bonnet Les Secretz naturiens selon les plus grans philozophes, ou Le Secret aux philosophes**
- MS. 1090 1. Seneca, Des Remèdes ou Confors des mauz de fortune**
- 2. Albertanus, Le Livre de Melib6e el Prudence**
- MS. 1185 Christine de Pisan, L'Epitre d'Othéa à Hector**
- MS. 1105 Guillaume de Tignonville, Des dietz des phylozophes**
- MS. 1174 Montferrant, Les Douze Dames de rhéthorique, avec Les Epitres de Jean Robertet et Georges Chastellain**

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Pulpito 5

- MS. 170 Augustine La Cité de Dieu (v. 1)**
- MS. 171 Augustine La Cité de Dieu (v. 2)**

- MS. 575 Boethius, De consolacion**
- MS. 257 Quintus Curtius Rufus, Des fais du grant Alexandre**

- MS. 293 Li Fes des Romains, compillé ensemble de Salluste, de Suetoine, de Lucan ir hystorial (V. 1)**
- MS. 312 Vincent of Beauvais, Le Mireoir hystorial (v. 1)**
- MS. 313 Vincent of Beauvais, Le Mireoir hystorial (v. 2)**
- MS. 314 Vincent of Beauvais, Le Mireoir hystorial (v. 4)**

Pulpito 6

- MS. 2799 Les Anciennes Chroniques de Flandres**
- MS. 88 Enguerrand de Monstrelet, Chroniques**
- MS. 2829 Des faiz ... saint Loys**

IV. "par terre devers les rossez"

Pulpito 1

- MS .17 Augustine, La Cité de Dieu (v. 1)**
- MS. 174 Augustine, La Cité de Dieu (v. 2)**
- MS. 39 Orosius**
- MS. 40 Les Anciennes Hystoires des Rommaines ... Lucan Suetoine et Soluste**
- MS. 156 Pierre Le Mangeur, La Bible historians, ou Les Histoires escolastres (v. 1)**

Pulpito 2

- MS, 65 Jean de Courcy, La Boucquehardière (v. 1)**
- MS 66 Jean de Courcy, La Boucauehardière (v. 2)**
- MS 68 William of Tyre, Eracles, le quel parle de la conquests de la terre sainte de Jherusalem avec continuation**

V. "par terre (du couste) devers la court"

Pulpito 1

[no entries]

Pulpito 2

- MS. 38 Les Commentaires de César**
- MS. 279 Les Commentaires de César, chronique allant de César a l'année 1325**
- MS. 59 Recueil des hystoires de Troyez**
- Ms. 34 Livy**

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MS. 288 Valerius Maximus (v. 1)

MS. 289 Valerius Maximus (v. 2)

Pulpito 3

- MS. 133 Boccaccio Des cleres et nobles femmes**
- MS. 189 1. Merveilles**
- 2. Le Roman de sept saiges**
- MS. 137 Ovid, Methamorphose, avec moralisation**
- MS. 204 1. Aristotle, Politiques**
- 2. Aristotle, Yconomique**
- 3. Aristotle, Ethiques et politiques**
- MS. 134 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, Des propriétés des choses**

VI. "entre les première et seconde croyées, contre la muraille vers les fossez."

Pulpito 1

MS. 761 Le Roman d'Artus le restoré

Pulpito 2

[no entries]

Pulpito 3

MS. 358 Guiron le courtois (v. 1)
MS. 359 Guiron le courtois (v. 2, pt. 1)
MS. 360 Guiron le courtois (v. 2, pt. 2)

Pulpito 4

MS. 361 Guiron le courtois (v. 3, pt. 1)
MS. 362 Guiron le courtois (v. 3, pt. 2)
MS. 363 Guiron le courtois (v. 4)
MS. 121 Le Roman de Lancelot du Lac (v. 1)
MS. 122 Le Roman de Lancelot du Lac (v. 2)
MS. 123 Le Roman de Lancelot du Lac (v. 3)

Pulpito 5

MS. 95 1. L'Estoire del saint Graal
2. L'Estoire de Merlin
3. Le Roman de sept sages
4. La Penitence Adam
MS. 103 Le Roman de Tristan [en prose]

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VII. "aux armoyres dessoubz le pulpistre de la Chronicque d'Angleterre"

MS. 861 Virgil, L'Eneide
MS. 2235 Alan Charlier, Le Livre des quatre dames
MS 5869 Compilation faite en l'honneur de Louis XII, lors de son avènement à la couronne

VIII. des vulgaires italiens"

Pulpito 1

MS. it. 372 Gestes du ... Francisque Sforcia, duc de Milan

Puipito 2

MS. It. 72 Dante, Commedia

By the time of the 1544 inventory--the other surviving inventory that I referred to earlier--organization of texts (at the inventory level, if not shelving, too) had been fully rationalized at Blois: subject divisions existed for not only the Latin texts but for many of the vernacular ones as well. The shelving instructions also had been added by 1544. And surely the shelving instructions had to be written and the organizing done prior to the 1544 inventory, for the 1544 list was written hurriedly by two of the king's accountants at Blois, perhaps even dictated one to the other," [17](#) as the movers were preparing to take the collection Fontainebleau. If that move proceeded like any I have ever been a part of, 1544 was not the time to think about organizing anything. Any order that we might perceive in the 1544 catalog represents the arrangement of the books at some earlier period, once again pointing to circa 1530 and Lefèvre d'Étaples.

Like the 1518 inventory, we have lost the original of the 1544 inventory. We are fortunate, however, to have

two copies of it: a contemporary copy, sort of a packing inventory, that was included with the books sent to Fontainebleau,¹⁸ and a copy made from the now lost original (long kept at Blois to show what was sent to Fontainebleau) in 1719 and then preserved in *Chambres des comptes* at Blois until it was added to the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.¹⁹ The 1544 inventory ²⁰ lists a total of I items, that is, 270 more items than the 1626 of the Vienna inventory. It is arranged into, first, non-vernacular texts, and then, vernacular ones; thus virtually reversing the order of the Vienna inventory, and perhaps suggesting something about what Francis I wished to say about himself by foregrounding classical letters rather than native ones. We should recall that the original library at Blois, begun by Charles, duke of Orléans, was above all the private library of a learned poet in retirement.

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It was a library where, at least in 1518, Petit saw fit to compose a catalog solely of romance works (so he says in his preface) and to exclude almost all of the Latin ones in the chateau. By the time of the 1544 inventory the library had become an extension and reflection of a state that was beginning to insist upon classical models rather than native ones. We may pause here to note that it was this same idea of the library reflecting the state that caused Louis XIV to order much of the royal library rebound in uniform red morocco--and that incidentally destroyed many of the Blésois shelving slips in the process, making our job of reconstruction many times more difficult than it would otherwise have been.

What can the 1544 inventory suggest about how books were shelved after the organizing work of Lefèvre d'Étaples? Can this tell us anything about the way knowledge was organized as France turned from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance? The 1518 inventory, we recall, contains one alphabetical list of French titles followed by five unorganized lists, primarily of French works but with a few Latin and Italian works included. To this is appended in the Vienna manuscript the catalog of non-vernacular works under twelve subject headings: "theologie," "jurs, canonici," "juris civilis," "philosophies" "medicine," "astrologie, perspective, arithmetice, geometries artis militaris, rei edificatorie, rustice et agriculture," "grammatices," "logicalium," "poesis," "eloquentie," "historialium and "greorum et hebreorum." If these nonvernacular texts were stored throughout the room as the vernacular ones at the time of Petit's inventory in 1518, the Blésois library must have been out of control after a quarter century of unprecedented growth. Lefèvre d'Étapl apparently reformed and reshelved the collection along lines more suitable for a collection of its size. By the time of the 1544 inventory, the nonvernacular subject divisions have been slightly modified--history has been subdivided into "veterum" and "recentium," philosophy into naturalism and "moralis," and logic has been absorbed under other headings--while two more categories have been added for forty-two music and chant texts. Greater changes appear among the vernacular texts, which are now listed according to subject matter under six headings: forty-one items under "histoires de la Table Ronde," 176 under a division entitled "droit" but which also encompasses chronicle and history, fourteen under "livres en vulgaire italien," sixty-one under "theologie," sixty-two under "autres livres de th[e]ologie in italien et espagnol," and 148 under "autres livres d'histoires et poètes italiens en ryme et en prose." Two lists of books held in chests (*casses*), one of seventy items, the other of seventy-one, follow the inventory of vernacular texts.²¹ The catalog ends with an account of ten books on loan to various borrowers. If the French king wanted to foreground classical learning by moving the Latin texts to the front of the inventory, we

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should also note that the growth in the library between 1518 and 1544 was in the romance domain: virtually all of the 200+ acquisitions in these years are French, Italian, and Spanish texts.

I find that separate shelving area for stories of the Round Table particularly intriguing. The area "entre les première et seconde croysées, contre la muraille vers les fossez" was reserved exclusively for Arthurian works. The 1518 inventory lists nineteen Arthurian items--at least eleven of which Louis XII acquired from Louis of Bruges's collection. The 1544 inventory lists forty-one items. Arthurian literature was the fastest growing part of the library, and someone, perhaps Lefèvre d'Étaples, must have realized that it needed to be shelved apart from everything else in order to avoid running out of space and (one imagines the librarian cringing) the need to reorder the collection yet once again. It can be inferred from the shelving instructions that five shelves stood between the first and second crosses. The top shelf (pulpito 1) held a copy of the *Roman d'Artus le restore*, i.e.,

Artus de Bretagne. The first half of *Guiron le courtois*, that concerning Meliadus, could be found on the third shelf, while the second half of the romance, concerning Guiron himself, shared the fourth shelf with a *Prose Lancelot*. A *Prose Tristan* and a manuscript that opens with an *Estoire del Saint Graal* occupied the fifth shelf. I have not been able to discover any shelving instructions to indicate what was on the second shelf, although other possibilities from the 1518 inventory are a "Blason des armes de la Table Ronde" and Destruction de la Table Ronde" [a *Mort Artu*?]. Another possibility is a four-Volume *Perceforest* that was added sometime between 1518 and 1544. I believe this last series of hefty tomes must have been shelved, as we would in our own homes, anywhere it would fit into the already crowded Arthurian section. The *Perceforest* is, we may also note, at the very end of the Arthurian list in the 1544 inventory. This suggests that it was shelved in some upper or lower corner of the section, perhaps with the *Prose Tristan* on the bottom shelf.

That stories of the Round Table were considered *sui generis* at least early as 1530 should make us reconsider where they "fit" in our idea about late medieval/early Renaissance genres. It is often held, for example, that late fifteenth-century readers not only thought of Arthur as historical but classified works about him along with other histories.²² But if the way we organize our libraries reflects the distinctions we make, then the shelving at Blois tells us that Arthurian literature occupied a unique physical and thus mental space of its own. Arthuriana was considered a genre in and of itself.

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I have less of a 'conclusion to this work than a plea to those of you who describe and edit manuscripts. This essay represents an extended footnote to an edition I am preparing of one of the Arthurian works mentioned a moment ago. Inside the boards of this manuscript I saw one of these curious shelving notices, which began my current research into the library where the Volume was located, and ultimately to the Volumes that were shelved with and around it. But this research was hindered by a prevalent belief that codicology is unimportant, that such things as shelving notices (as well as illuminations, spine titles, quire gathering, ruling and justification, to name but a few) are extra-textual and therefore not part of the editor's job in putting together a text. Shelving instructions exist in at least 121 manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and although many of these manuscripts have been studied and published in various prestigious monographic series, rarely have the shelving instructions been considered worthy of note. Sometime the instructions do not appear even in facsimiles, which often begin with the text "proper."²³ We have learned in the last several decades that when we edit a single text within a multiwork manuscript that we must consider all the other texts in the manuscript, too. Take a look at how much we have profited from careful scrutiny of the Guiot manuscript of Chrétien's poems. Yet we should not stop there. Each manuscript was made for somebody. One of the ways that we can find out more about the patrons and thus the literary tastes that guided authors and copyists to make particular choices for them, is to pay greater attention to the libraries that helped patrons form their tastes in the first place. To say that a work "stops" just because we have come to the last page in the manuscript fails to recognize that that book came from a shelf where it was sandwiched between other works which, directly or indirectly, may influenced the manuscript we have just read.

Notes

1. Pierre Champion, *La Librairie de Charles d'Orléans* (Paris: Champion, 1910), gives a composite list of the Volumes that must have been in Charles's collection.
2. I must leave to the experts the the difficult issue of precisely what form of furniture the *pulpito* implies in early sixteenth-century France. I use the term "shelf" for simplicity, and by it I mean only to designate a discrete area in which texts were stored
3. See Frédéric Lesueur, *Le Château de Blois: Tel qu'ilfut, tel qu'i est, tel g,u' il aurait pu être* (Paris: Picard, 1970), for the château's history. Lesueur's remarks about the library appear on p. 81.
4. MS .2548.
5. For this and other references to the inventories of 1518 and 1544, I cite from Henri Omont, *Anciens Inventaires et catalogues de la Bibliothèque*

Nationale, 5 vols. (Paris: Leroux, 1908-21); this is from 1: 1. I have also drawn data on shelving instructions from Pierre Arnauld's unfinished, annotated edition of the first 132 items of the 1518 catalog; Arnauld's edition appears in a series of articles in *Le Bibliographe moderne*, 6-12 (1902-1908), 14 (1910), and 1916-17 (18).

6. The inventory does not list the promised Spanish works.

7. Five blank leaves (fols. 62-66) follow the list of the first 404 titles. Was there a plan to place the Spanish works here?

8. Petit is often content to group all titles beginning with, for example, "A" without worrying too much about filing on the basis of the following letters. The 1222 items in the latter part of the inventory are generally alphabetized correctly.

9. The exception is the Italian category, which Petit gives the heading of "Table and inventaire des livres en vulgaire italien, couverts de veloux." But the Vienna manuscript does not have the anticipated companion list of books *not* so covered.

10. Omont, 1:217, note to item 1269.

11. Many of the extant Volumes now in the Bibliothèque Nationale that can be traced to Louis of Bruges are cataloged in Joseph Van Praet, *Recherches sur Louis de Bruges, seigneur de la Gruthuys* (Paris: Bure Frères, 1831).

12. Cited in Omont, 5:12, n. 1.

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13. Omont, 5:9-12.

14. The numbers that one often finds on an opening leaf of a manuscript at the Bibliothèque Nationale are later, and correspond to later inventories. The Arabic-style numbers--usually two of them--correspond to the inventories of 1645 by Pierre and Jacques Dupuy and of 1682 by Nicolas Clement. The other number--either a French number spelled out (e.g., "quatre cents soixant quatre") or a Roman number (e.g., "MCCLIII")--correspond to Nicolas Rigault's second 1622 inventory.

15. I have generally followed Arnauld's annotated edition of the Vienna manuscript in assigning items in the 1518 inventory to extant manuscripts.

16. Although I have usually retained the title as it appears in the *Catalogue général des manuscrits français*, ed. J. Taschereau et al., 18 vols. (Paris, 1868-1918), I have generally given the author's name in its *Encyclopedia Britannica* form.

17. Omont, 5:16.

18. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds français MS. 5660.

19. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds français MS. 12999.

20. I will refer to the contents of MS. 5660 only.

21. Old habits die hard: the "livres estans aux casses" in 1544 continue to include such valuable manuscripts as the *Grandes Heures* and Petrarch's *Trionfi*, now in *different* chests.

22. See Larry D. Benson's influential chapter on "Fifteenth-Century Prose Romance" in *Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1976), 17-36. One of the linchpins in Benson's argument that Arthurian romance was considered history by contemporary readers relies on a 1467 inventory of library of Philip the Good of Burgundy. Benson cites Georges Doutrepoint's analysis of Philip's collection to prove that "in the catalog of 1467 all these [Arthurian] works are classified as 'histories'" (18). What Doutrepoint [*La Littérature française à la cour des ducs de Bourgogne: le Hardi, Jean sans Peur, Phil le Bon, Charles le Temeraire* (Paris: Champion, 1909), 19] in fact says is that all the Arthurian Volumes are "historiés" ["illustrated"]. As much as I might like to believe with Benson that stories of the Round Table were thought of as histories (e.g., 20, 24), Philip's 1467 inventory does not bear on the issue, and the organization of the largest Arthurian collection on the Continent indicates that sharper distinctions were already being made at least as early as the first part of the sixteenth century.

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2323. I point specifically to the Library of Congress's large collection of mounted photographs of Bibliothèque Nationale manuscripts. These were produced by the Modern Language Association's Committee on the Reproduction of Manuscripts and Rare Private Books and then deposited at the Library of Congress in the 1930s. Unfortunately, most of these reproductions begin with the opening folio of the text itself, thus omitting preliminary material that could be useful for dating, provenance, etc.