2022

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Abstract
This article examines Newberry MS 5017, the Book of Magical Charms, a manuscript miscellany dated no later than 1639. The manuscript formed part of the Newberry Library's crowd-sourcing project to transcribe and translate three of the manuscripts in their exhibition, Religious Change 1450-1700. This article establishes Robert Ashley (1565-1641) as the manuscript's author. Ashley was a lawyer, translator and bibliophile whose bequest of over 5,000 books established the library at Middle Temple, one of the four Inns of Court. The article analyses the manuscript's charms, ritual magic, medical recipes and Christian esotericism excerpts to show that they were mainly transcribed from identifiable manuscript sources, with some from printed books. The author draws conclusions, based on Ashley's life, translations and book collection, about the manuscript's purpose and use, situating it within Ashley's library and the information gathering networks centered around the Inns of Court in the early modern period.

Keywords
Robert Ashley (1565-1641), inns of court, manuscript studies, early modern scribal culture, history of information

This article is available in Manuscript Studies: https://repository.upenn.edu/mss_sims/vol6/iss2/3
Robert Ashley and the Authorship of Newberry MS 5017, The Book of Magical Charms

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The Book of Magical Charms (Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 5017) is a manuscript miscellany by Robert Ashley (1565–1641), bibliophile, lawyer, translator, and founder of the Library at Middle Temple, one of the four Inns of Court. Analysis has revealed that the manuscript contains charms, medical recipes, ritual magic, and some miscellaneous topics. Most of the miscellany’s excerpts were sourced from manuscripts, with a small percentage from printed books; the latest verifiable text to be dated is Angelo Rocca, De Campanis Commentarius, from 1612.¹

¹ The manuscript also contains a reference to John of Salisbury, Policraticus, Sive de Nugis Curialium, which was published in 1480, 1513, 1595, and 1639, but it has not been possible to identify the edition he used.

I am sincerely grateful to Laura Estill, L. S. Chardonnens, and Kate Anstey for reviewing an initial draft of this paper and providing invaluable comments, which greatly improved the work. Frank Klaassen assisted with his invaluable insight into magic manuscripts at an early stage of my research. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers, whose comments (and corrections) were immensely helpful and made this a much better article.

I am greatly indebted to Krislyn Zhorne and Suzanne Karr Schmidt, who, respectively, provided their outline of the miscellany and foliation and photographs of the manuscript’s watermarks. The latter were very difficult to discern and did not provide any information with which to date the manuscript further.

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Newberry MS 5017 has been labeled as a book of magical charms, but analysis of its diverse miscellaneous contents, and its place within Ashley’s collection, has shown that it is more than a magic manuscript. The scribes of most early modern magic manuscripts remain unknown, but we can definitively place Newberry MS 5017 in Ashley’s substantial library and situate it in the context of his life experiences and translations. The manuscript is now held by the Newberry Library, but proper analysis of it requires that we position it as an integral component of his collection. It was compiled by a lawyer, not a magician, and this affects its interpretation and place within early modern manuscript culture. Situating the miscellany in the “material, social, and cultural contexts” of Ashley’s milieu “enables us to bring [it] into dialogue with what we know about the people, institutions, and practices” he engaged with in his personal and professional life.2

The miscellany is an excellent representative of the wide range of scribal sources available to early modern English scholars engaged in complex information networks. It has preserved a host of ephemeral texts that would otherwise have been lost and shows how early modern scribal culture continued to disseminate pre-modern texts. It demonstrates how one early modern scholar was capable, as a learned individual, of compiling arcane pieces of information from diverse sources, of understanding their secrets, and of making them useful to others. The Newberry’s digitization of the manuscript and the associated online transcription/translation project have ensured that it remains a viable source of information for future scholars of early modern texts.3

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3 For the digitized manuscript and the transcriptions, see Newberry Digital Collections (Newberry Library), https://collections.carli.illinois.edu/digital/collection/nby_dig/id/2699.
Biographical Background

Robert Ashley was born in 1565 in Damerham (originally Wiltshire, now Hampshire), the second son of Anthony Ashley and Dorothy Lyte. His elder brother was Anthony Ashley (1551–1628), Clerk of the Privy Council, and his younger brother was Francis Ashley (1569–1635), Member of Parliament for Dorchester. Robert and Francis’s early education was provided at home by tutors, but as it progressed, they were placed in Adrian Saravia’s school at Southampton, before moving on to Dr. Adam Hill’s public school in Salisbury. Due to an outbreak of plague, Robert and Francis returned home to be tutored by Francis Marbury.

At the age of fifteen Robert was sent to Hart Hall, Oxford, but moved to Alban Hall. He was then instructed by his brother Anthony, on the recommendation of Sir William Hatton, to engage John Barbon of Magdalen College as his tutor. Barbon moved him to Magdalen Hall, whence Ashley obtained his bachelor’s degree. He became a fellow of, and obtained a master of arts degree from, Magdalen College, after which he “was appointed to give public lectures in Geometry,” despite not knowing much about the subject. He was then admitted to the Middle Temple but left after a disagreement with his brother Anthony, devoting two years to the study of music, languages, and politics. Directed by Sir Francis Walsingham, and Ashley’s “intimate friend Sir Henry Unton,” he also visited France, claiming that Walsingham instructed him to enter Germany as a legate after Sir Horatio Palavicino, but Walsingham’s death prevented this from happening and Ashley returned to England. In 1589 he published two translations: *L’Uranie ou Muse Celeste* (London: John Wolfe), dedicated to Sir Henry Unton; and *A Comparison of the English and Spanish Nation* (London: John Wolfe), dedicated to Sir William Hatton. In 1591/2, through his friend-

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ship with Sir Thomas Baskerville, he joined the English army in France, fighting with the king of Navarre against the House of Guise. He returned to England after falling ill during the Siege of Rouen.

Anthony recommended Robert as a secretary to Sir John Puckering, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, but his lack of success in this role meant that he soon returned to the study of the law and he was finally called to the Bar in 1594. In this year he published another translation: Louis Leroy’s *Of the Interchangeable Course* (London: Charles Yetswert), dedicated to Sir John Puckering, to whom he also dedicated his first copy of the unpublished *Of Honour*, written at some point prior to 1596. The second copy was dedicated to Sir Thomas Egerton, who succeeded Puckering as Lord Keeper in 1596.8

His *Vita* provides no substantial details of his middle years, but they were most likely spent practicing as a lawyer. In 1607 he petitioned the Earl of Salisbury to be considered as successor to Anthony as Clerk of the Privy Council, but he was unsuccessful. In 1617, as Sir Dudley Carleton recounted in a letter to Sir Ralph Winwood, Ashley was in The Hague; while in the Netherlands he also visited Leiden, where he saw the memorial stone to Ludolph van Ceulen in St. Peter’s.9 Then, in 1618, ostensibly at the request of Sir Robert Sherley, Ashley traveled to France and to Spain, where he visited the Escorial Library.

Further writings and translations include Ashley’s Latin contribution to the 1626 memorial volume for Francis Bacon; a partial translation of Miguel de Luna’s *Almansor* dedicated to Charles I; and the 1633 translation of Cristoforo Borri’s *Cochin-China* dedicated to Sir Maurice Abbot, governor of

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9 *Letters From and to Sir Dudley Carleton, Knt. During His Embassy in Holland*, 2nd ed. (London: s.n., 1775), 172–74. There is a note about the memorial stone in Ashley’s copy of Thomas Burgmann’s *Quadratura Circuli Nova* (s.l., s.n., 1608), sig. C3r, and Justus Lipsius’s *Mellificium duplex ex media philosophia petitum* (Leiden: Francis Raphelengius, 1591), final end leaf.
the East India Company.\textsuperscript{10} His final translation was Virgilio Malvezzi’s \textit{David Persecuted}.\textsuperscript{11}

Robert Ashley died in 1641 and bequeathed his library, bedding, furniture, and £300 to the Middle Temple; he was buried in Temple Church. His library contained approximately 5,000 books (mostly continental imprints) at the time of his death, containing books on history, medicine, politics, science, theology, and travel, among other topics.\textsuperscript{12}

Ashley’s collection noticeably lacks manuscripts, however, including personal papers. Middle Temple Library’s manuscript collection does contain pre-1641 manuscripts, but none have any definitive links to Ashley, and manuscripts/personal papers were not itemized in his will.\textsuperscript{13} Compared to other collectors at the Inns of Court of this time, such as Robert Cotton (1571–1631) and Elias Ashmole (1617–92), it is highly probable that his collection did include substantial manuscript material: either the Library Keeper de-accessioned Ashley’s manuscripts and papers, retaining only the printed books, or they were not included in the bequest (there is no evidence in the archival records).

\textit{Description of Newberry MS 5017}

Through comparison with Ashley’s handwriting in his \textit{Vita} and book marginalia, I identified the \textit{Book of Magical Charms} as a manuscript


\textsuperscript{11} Virgilio Malvezzi, \textit{David Persecuted} (London: John Haviland for Thomas Knight, 1637).


\textsuperscript{13} London, Middle Temple Library, MS MT.9/RAW/1.
Figure 1. Folio 2r: “In lib. primo Theologiae Mysticae cap. 55 De virtutibus acquiendis.” Chicago, Newberry Library, VAULT Case MS 5017.
Figure 2. Ashley’s excerpts from Lactantius, Institutionum divinarum (London, Middle Temple Library, BAY L (FOLIOS)), book 1, chapter 4, as found on the end leaves in his copy of Seneca, Lucubrationes omnes (Basel: Johann Froben, 1515).

London, Middle Temple Library, BAY L (ASHLEY).
Figure 3. Ashley’s excerpts from John of Salisbury, Policraticus, Sive de Nugis Curialium, book 8, chapter 13 as found on the following end leaf in Seneca, Lucibrationes omnes. London, Middle Temple Library, BAY L (ASHLEY).
miscellany in his hand in 2017. This was confirmed by the Newberry’s resident calligrapher, Robert Williams, and corroborated by Joshua Eckhardt. Eckhardt noted that the handwriting shared many distinguishing features with inscriptions found in Ashley’s marginalia: “an ascender with an unusually high floor in ‘h’; a slight bend in ‘L’; the fluid, low swoop in ‘I’; &c.” Figures 1, 2, and 3 compare the miscellany’s handwriting to two examples of Ashley’s book marginalia.

Analysis of the miscellany is based on the digitized version, which has allowed for detailed examination and searching. The digital version omits most of the blank leaves and presents the text as continuous, whereas the physical version consists of two segments of text separated by blank leaves, with the second segment inverted; the online version is presumably presented in this manner to aid the transcription and translation project. The manuscript consists of 285 leaves, with 86 leaves of handwritten text (disregarding leaves where the only text is a foliation number). Folios 1 to 39r (images 1 to 81, online) are presented as they would be when viewing the physical version as it is currently bound. In the physical miscellany there then follow over 200 foliated blank leaves excluded from the digital version, apart from a selection of leaves (see Appendix I for details). The digital version presents the final segment of text (starting at 285r of the physical copy) as if the leaves were right-side up and sequential from the first segment of text, thus presenting the online version as one continuous notebook. For example, the strip of parchment binder’s waste (likely used as a binding reinforcement) in the gutter of the binding at the end of the phys-
cal miscellany is presented in the online version as being in the middle (image 85, online). As discussed in more detail further on, it is possible that folio 285r with its Lactantius maxim, “Primus sapientiae gradus est falsa intelligere” (the first step toward wisdom is to perceive falsehood) is the start of the manuscript.

The Newberry’s catalogue record collates the miscellany as: 260, [1], 10, [19] leaves, as the manuscript is foliated by hand to folio 260, with an additional ten leaves numbered, and twenty leaves ([1] and [19]) being unfoliated.20 The miscellany’s current foliation, the Newberry’s digital image number, first lines, and hand-numbered folio numbers are all listed in Appendix I. References to folios in this analysis use the current foliation.

The miscellany contains short selections of diagrams, figures, and texts. The language is Latin and English, with one small segment of Dutch on folio 30r. Catchwords are often provided when a passage breaks across two pages. Some of the charms, experiments, and medical recipes are cross-referenced, such as a prescription for the flux (fol. 19v): “supra fol. 13 b.” The miscellany is not indexed and does not use headings. Ashley underlined the text throughout, which is a common practice in books he owned. There is no formal end to the manuscript (no fin or other end word), although individual passages are often marked with a forward slash to indicate their ending.

Many of the sources for the excerpts can be traced, and Appendix I lists identified material and possible sources for unidentified excerpts.21 I have categorized the miscellany into broad themes, which do not run sequentially in the manuscript, including astrology, charms, experiments, medical recipes, and ritual magic, among others.22 These categories are not intended to be exhaustive or mutually exclusive, and I readily admit that using twenty-

20 There are gaps in the hand foliation. The catalogue record is available at: https://i-share-nby.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CARLI_NBY/i5mcb2/alma991002788805867.
21 The online transcription project provided many leads for the sources for these excerpts. See n. 16 above.
22 For charms, I have applied Lea Olsan’s definition: “spoken, chanted and written formulas . . . circulated both by word of mouth and through manuscript and amuletic texts.” Lea T. Olsan, “Charms in Medieval Memory,” in Charms and Charming in Europe, ed. Jonathan Roper (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 60.
first century criteria to categorize the excerpts places new meaning on the manuscript; modern researchers will examine and interpret its contents in ways very different from those intended by Ashley. The use of modern categorizations does allow us, however, to compare the miscellany’s excerpts to the themes in his collection, as the books are catalogued using standardized subject headings such as “astrology,” “demonology,” “medicine, magic, mystic, and spagyric,” “meditative prayers,” and “occultism.” The miscellany does not include extracts from the broader range of subjects found in his book collection, such as foreign cultures, history, languages, law, politics, or theology.

**Analysis**

The material in this miscellany reflects the personal interests and collecting habits of an early modern English scholar who developed private study skills, such as reading, learning foreign languages, collaborating, and extensive note taking at an early age. It reveals his interest in astrology, magic, medicine, mysticism, and related subjects through its selection of textual extracts. Such copying and extracting practices were common practice in the early modern period, but to fully understand the miscellany they must be analyzed in the context of Ashley’s life experiences, translations, and library. Collectively, the miscellany and Ashley’s collection of printed books reflect his lifelong collecting habits and his interest in compiling information and knowledge. Ashley often used his printed books to record excerpted material, always within the subject area of the book in question, or with information about its author. In his will Ashley stated that he had “addicted [his] selfe to the Generall Study of the great Booke of the World wherein All the glorious works of God are comprehended: for the Attayneing of some knowledge whereof I have not spared my Labour or Expence in procuring the

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23 These are Library of Congress subject headings, which reflect the books’ current classification: Middle Temple Library Catalogue, www.middletemplelibrary.org.uk.

Principall Writings in their severall languages.”25 During Ashley’s time at Middle Temple, manuscripts were used extensively in accounts, all aspects of the legal system, commonplace books, correspondence, and newsletters, and were readily copied and circulated around the Inns of Court.26 The loss rate for early modern manuscripts is high, however, and it is entirely feasible that Ashley had more miscellanies and commonplace books covering other topics that would have complemented this attempt to attain “some knowledge.”27

Experiments, medical recipes, and charms were actively circulated in various forms, with common themes and formulae repeating. The miscellany’s experiments include those to protect, uncover theft, and win at dice and at love. Some experiments match those found in BL Sloane MS 3850, including “Hanc figurum tulit Angelus D[omi]ni Danielis” and “Experiments of invisibilitie and of love.”28 The former, which includes a diagrammatic figure shown by an angel to Daniel while in the lion’s den, is an example of the textual amulets used throughout the medieval period that continued to be used into the early modern period.29 The experiment “to speak with spirits” at folio 7r is the same as that in Reginald Scot’s The Discoverie of Witchcraft, as are the circle diagrams on folio 282r.30 Ashley owned a copy of Discoverie, but it does not display any marginalia in his hand and is missing its title page. It does show evidence of an earlier hand and evidence of marginal dashes at various points, including at these circle diagrams, at the “counter charmes against these and all other witchcrafts,”

25 London, Middle Temple Library, MS MT.9/RAW/1.
28 London, British Library, Sloane MS 3850, fol. 76r and 143r, respectively.
29 Fol. 4r. Don Skemer, Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 181 and 117.
30 Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft (London: Henry Denham for William Brome, 1584), Sig. Hh1r.
and at “a charme for the choine cough.” It is impossible to know if the marginal dashes were made by Ashley, and none of the other experiments in Scot match those in the miscellany, including the cure for headaches (*contra capites dolorem*) at folio 33r.

It is a difficult task to definitively find the sources for the medical recipes that Ashley collected, which form a distinct sequence at folios 18v–27v. In addition to the innumerable books published containing medical cures, recipes were commonly compiled in commonplace books and miscellanies, including astrologers’ and physicians’ casebooks. For example, in his commonplace book Sir Stephen Powle (1553–1630) attributed the recipes for sight, toothache, and urinary problems (dated 1613/1614) to Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618). Powle and Raleigh were members of Middle Temple and shared a chamber.

Many of the medical recipes contain repeated formulae in the form of efficacy phrases: “probatum/probatum est,” “consummatum,” and “proved.” Efficacy phrases were common in recipe collections: they were copied verbatim, presented a theoretical effectiveness, and were not an indication of systematic testing. But the recording of these recipes created a permanent record that justified their effectiveness, whether they had been tried or not and regardless of the additional notation of the proof. The attribution to a learned or influential person, which lent authority to the efficacy of the recipe, was also common. Ashley attributed a charm to “Fryer Bacon” (pre-
sumably Roger Bacon, 1214?–94), and medical recipes to William Butler, Fellow of Clare College Cambridge, the “Parson of Waltham Michael Carpenter,” and the Lady Cane of Bygrene. 38

Folio 29v contains a series of charms that have not been traced, but they are examples of the types that were widely available from various sources, including books, healers, manuscripts, and cunning folk. The latter handed them out to their clients on individual pieces of paper, creating a material object that was as efficacious as the text itself. 39 If cunning folk were Ashley’s source for the charms, he likely collected them first and then copied them into the miscellany to store and save them, as they appear in a reasonably distinct sequence in the miscellany.

Ashley would not have narrowly differentiated between charms, experiments, and medicine as we do now, nor would he have automatically dismissed magic’s potential to help him find love and success in life. 40 Ashley made frequent mention of misfortunes (debt, gambling, and theft) and ailments in his autobiography, and he likely copied those charms, experiments, and recipes best suited to solve the problems that were personal to him. Medical cures in early modern books and miscellanies return “us to the natural body of the reader with all the reminders seventeenth-century living imparted of the frailty of the human constitution and the proximity of death.” 41 The miscellany contains two experiments to win at dice, two to reveal stolen items, and one to find treasure. His library contained at least five books on usury, three on interest/pawnbroking (all of which are incubables), and two on card games/dice/gambling. 42 The ailments that Ashley suffered included fever, a thorn in the eye, and the inability to pass urine. 43 The miscellany contains many recipes to cure such ailments, such as recipes

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38 Fols. 9r, 23v, 26r, and 28v, respectively.
40 In his Vita, Ashley noted that he often had prophetic dreams and recounted eleven of them. Sloane MS 2131, fol. 19v.
42 One of these books on usury, John of Capistrano’s Tractatus (Cologne, ca. 1482) also discusses theft.
43 Sloane MS 2131, fol. 18v.
for passing urine and to cure a fever, medicine for kidney stones or gallstones, and a method to extract a thorn. He owned at least three books on kidneys and their diseases, and eight on uroscopy.

Ashley’s book collection contained nine titles that can be categorized as collections of medical recipes. One is a uniquely surviving copy, *Here Beginneth the Recule of Prety Co[n]ceytes* . . . (London: [s.n.], ca. 1545) and in another he noted the efficacy of a particular balm: “tincturarum sive bal-samorum excellentia.” Although the miscellany’s medical recipes are all in English, there is no correlation to those found in the *Recule of Prey Co[n] ceytes.*

The charms, experiments, and recipes demonstrate how an early modern reader compiled and conceptualized new and old ideas about medicine and healing during a period of transition in the understanding of the body and its ailments. Ashley lived during a period that was characterized by a gradual shift from the Galenic/humoral worldview toward one influenced by the writings of Paracelsus. Ashley owned six books by Galen and seventeen by Paracelsus, as well as twelve about Galen and nine about Paracelsus, which included a *Sammelband* of both authors’ works. He also heavily annotated one work on the principal differences between Galenists and Paracelsists, Claude Dariot’s *Premier Discours* (Lyon: Charles Pesnot, 1582). Comparing the miscellany to the range of printed medical books that Ashley owned shows that collectively he read and copied them as a form of medical education and to further his medical knowledge.

The miscellany’s ritual magic excerpts consist of spells; suffumigations; the secret name for God, Tetragrammaton (written in English and “one of the most powerful words of magic”); and necromancy. Examples of the

44 Fols. 20v, 25r, 23v, 27r and 20r, respectively.
45 Johann Pharamund Rhumel, *Compendium Hermeticum, de Macrocosmo et Microcosmo* (s.l.: s.n., 1635), sig. A3r.
46 It is possible that Ashley translated recipes from his continental imprints, but that level of analysis would require a separate study.
latter are the *Vinculum Salomonis* and the fourteenth-century mystical manuscript *The Cloud of Unknowing* (fol. 8r). The latter was “one of the most admired products of the Middle English mystical tradition,” and Ashley singled out the chapter (55) that dealt with spirit conjuring. Other ritual magic excerpts include the *Sator*, “a well-known Latin magic word square, or acrostic.”

The magic excerpts found on folios 5r to 6v, *Regula utilissima in arte magica*, are from *Elementa Magica* by Petrus de Abano (ca. 1250–1315). Often referred to as the *Heptameron*, this work was spuriously attributed to de Abano, whose reputation as a “magus and necromancer” originated in the sixteenth century from authors like Agrippa, Trithemius, and others. If the spurious nature of the authorship was known to Ashley, it could explain why he did not attribute these passages to de Abano as he did with other works, such as the one on bells at folio 250v. There is no evidence that Ashley owned the printed version of this work.

The lack of attribution to de Abano is replicated in contemporary manuscripts containing the same excerpts from the *Heptameron*, including BL Sloane MS 3850 and BL Add. MS 36674. Compared to the printed version of the *Heptameron*, there are variations in the miscellany that are mirrored in MSS 3850 and 36674, such as using a heading that is not found in the printed version: *Regula utilissimae in arte magica* followed by *coniurationis operatio debet esse cum*. This indicates that all three manuscripts probably copied the text from another source, or one from the other. The heading *Salomonis Vinculum*, also found in MSS 3850 and 36674, is another example

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48 Fol. 1r. The *Vinculum Salomonis* was a “conjuration used in the case of a spirit who refuses to appear.” Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic*, 135. Ashley refers to it as the “Vinculum Salomonis” in the manuscript.
51 It was published in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim’s *De Occulta Philosophia* and went through many editions in the sixteenth century.
of communal sourcing/sharing of texts, as it is most often referred to and copied into other manuscripts as the *Vinculum Salomonis*.\footnote{Fols. 110r and 71v–72r, respectively. Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic*, 135.}

BL Sloane MS 3850 is also a potential sourcebook for some of the experiments, such as: “Write in a plate of led 2 fingers” and “note that all experiments hereof must be done” (fol. 11r). Interestingly, the left-hand margins in MS 3850 where these experiments are found have marginal annotations in a later hand: “*3” and “4.”\footnote{These experiments are not sequential in BL Sloane MS 3850 as they are in the miscellany.} Ashley’s use of numbers and symbols in the margins of his books to note passages of interest was common practice among early modern readers, and it would not have been unusual to mark such passages in a borrowed book or manuscript. At least one of the books that Richard Napier lent to Thomas Robson contained Robson’s handwritten correction, and he “probably also wrote the hash marks in the margins to denote which passages he had copied from these volumes into other notebooks.”\footnote{Lauren Kassell, “The Economy of Magic in Early Modern England,” in *The Practice of Reform in Health, Medicine, and Science, 1500–2000: Essays for Charles Webster*, ed. C. Webster, M. Pelling, and S. Mandelbrote (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 53.}

The marginal markings and numberings in MS 3850 are unfortunately too slight to determine with certainty whether Ashley made them, but they do resemble his handwriting and differ significantly from the scribe’s hand.

Another Sloane manuscript, BL Sloane MS 3846, is the potential source for “The extraordinarie vertues of certain Herbs” (fols. 266r–v), but Ashley’s text stops at the seventh herb, coriander.\footnote{The bottom half of this folio is blank.} MS 3846 was originally written by William Parry of Clifford’s Inn, an Inn of Chancery located next to Temple Bar. It was a copy of the *Sepher Raziel*, the *Book of the Angel Raziel*.\footnote{Garth D. Reese, “Reviewed Work: Sepher Raziel, Also Known as Liber Salomonis: A 1564 English Grimoire from Sloane MS 3826 by Don Karr, Stephen Skinner,” *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 3, no. 2 (2014): 406–8 at 407.}

The text is also present in MS v.b.26, a well-known sixteenth century
grimoire, but there are many more discrepancies between the relevant passages in comparison to MS 3846.59

BL Sloane MSS 3846, 3850, and Add. MS 36674 are all composite manuscripts that once belonged to Sir John Somers (1651–1716). These manuscripts contain material from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries and may have been circulating among members of the Inns of Court prior to their acquisition by Somers.60 Even if Somers’s manuscripts were not the definitive source for the material in the Newberry miscellany, the very close match of text shows how these types of materials were circulated and shared, in either original or oft-copied forms, well beyond their date of creation.

The section of the miscellany that runs from folios 252r to 265v contains handwriting that differs from Ashley’s identifiable hand.61 Ashley may have employed an amanuensis to copy this section, or he passed his notebook to a friend or relative, who added these sections, copying sources from their own collection. The Arundel Harington Manuscript, for example, originally compiled by John Harington (d. 1582) contained leaves with text written by his son Sir John Harington (1560–1612) sandwiched between his father’s earlier entries.62 However, the writing on the last leaves in this part of the Newberry miscellany do, to some extent, resemble Ashley’s hand and could indicate that he deliberately obscured his handwriting.63 The contemporary foliation and the immediate continuation of Ashley’s “normal” hand after this section indicate that these leaves were not inserted post-1641.

The other possibility is that this section predates Ashley’s contributions. There are two pieces of evidence to support the idea that he purchased the

60 László Sándor Chardonnens, “Magic Manuscripts from Somers and Jekyll in the Collections of the British Library,” Societas Magica Newsletter 35 (2017): 1–8. Provenance prior to Somers has not been traced. There is no evidence that Ashley read these manuscripts.
61 Joshua Eckhardt and Robert Williams agreed that it would be a challenge to attribute this hand to Ashley.
63 There is no evidence in Ashley’s book marginalia of anything similar, however.
FIGURE 4. The “code” on folio 285v of the manuscript outlined in yellow (bottom right corner, upside-down) to compare with figure 5. Chicago, Newberry Library, VAULT Case MS 5017.
Satterley, Robert Ashley and Newberry MS 5017

First, the Lactantius maxim at folio 285r: “Primus sapientiae gradus est falsa intelligere,” which is an adage suitable to the beginning of a miscellany. Second, a code in the upper left-hand side of folio 285v: “n/ . . . ” closely resembles codes found on the title pages of many of Ashley’s books. These could be pricing codes made by a bookseller (figures 4 and 5). As these codes are not in Ashley’s hand nor found in all his books, they are not evidence of a classification system. Without a full analysis of these codes, this remains speculative, but it could provide the best explanation for the presence of a different hand in the middle of the miscellany.

Whatever their origin, the excerpts at folios 252r to 265v denote the preservation of older elements of Catholic religious practice, since much of the text was copied from the Enchiridion Leonis Papae.64 The Enchiridion

64 Frank Klaassen, Making Magic in Elizabethan England (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), 24. Enchiridion Leonis Papae was published under different titles
was a collection of charms in the form of daily meditative protection prayers (or *oraisons*) “concerned with worldly advantages far more than with those of a spiritual kind”; they were ostensibly presented by Pope Leo III to Charlemagne (the authorship was modern and not attributable to Leo III).\(^ {65}\)

However, the litany of saints found on folios 253r and 252v (in the inverted part of the manuscript) differs greatly from that in the *Enchiridion* and may have been sourced from BL Sloane MS 3850.\(^ {66}\) In MS 3850 the litany is preceded by a shield diagram with the names *Fate, Agan, Ga, A, Bate, Poti, Rison, Vigan, Deigan,* and *Hafagan* (fol. 24r) that is also found in the miscellany (fol. 253v). MS 3850 also has the same ritual magic diagram (fols. 113r–113v) found spread across the miscellany’s folios 283r to 282v. Although it is impossible to know if MS 3850 was the source for these excerpts, that this information found its way into a variety of manuscripts shows how accessible it was. The *Enchiridion* does have diagrammatic figures, but not these specific ones.\(^ {67}\)

Collectively, the *oraisons*, litany of saints, and ritual magic characterize the ritualistic beliefs and practices that existed alongside the official religious canon in early modern England. Christianity and magic were closely linked in the early modern period, and collecting supernatural beliefs into a miscellany was not evidence of an un-Christian believer. The *oraisons* reflect the scribe’s willingness to “engage in warfare against the demonic in its various forms.”\(^ {68}\) There was a belief in the virtues and hidden power of objects and rituals, such as church bells, the Eucharist, and performing the
sign of the cross, which could be exploited for personal gain.\textsuperscript{69} Considered as a whole, the miscellany’s excerpts form a ritualistic compendium linking the “supernatural” to legitimate church rituals.

Ashley extracted a variety of passages that do not fall into the four genres of ritualistic materials discussed above. These were copied from various print and manuscript sources and are outlined in full in Appendix I. Of relevance to this discussion are a cipher table with a test cipher written under it: “Edwahd [sic] Eliet [sic] writ this” and an extract on predicting earthquakes from Leonard Digges, \textit{A Prognostication of Right Good Effect}.\textsuperscript{70}

The heading on this page, “Ex eodem lib. MS \[t/fo\]” suggests that the text came from the same manuscript as that of chapter 55 of the \textit{Cloud of Unknowing}. If so, it is possible that the \textit{Cloud} chapter was already circulated as an excerpt, and not excerpted from the whole work by Ashley. Folio 17r contains six items attributed to Abū-BAkr Ibn-al-Hasil al-Harašī from Thomas Lupton’s book of secrets, \textit{A Thousand Notable Things, of Sundry Sortes}, and a transcription to uncover a fugitive attributed to “Zael” (Sahl ibn Bishr).\textsuperscript{71} The original of the latter has not been identified and does not match any text in Lupton’s work. There are four folios containing longitude and latitude tables for cities. Many of the coordinates match those in G. A. Magini’s \textit{Ephemerides Coelestium Motuum}. Signature I4v, like the miscellany, lists \textit{Vienna Galliae} before \textit{Vienna Austriae}. This is unusual, as V. \textit{Austriae} normally precedes V. \textit{Galliae}. It is not clear why Magini’s table differs in this manner, and whether it was a typographical error. Magini’s book appeared in many editions, but it contains only some of the British cities listed in the miscellany. It is possible that Ashley calculated these longitudes and latitudes himself from maps in his own or another collection, but

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{69} Allison Coudert, \textit{Religion Magic and Science in Early Modern Europe and America} (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2001), 36.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Fols. 8v. and 16v., respectively. The Prognostication went through many editions from 1555 to 1626; the 1565 and 1578 London editions provide the most accurate matches.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Thomas Lupton, \textit{A Thousand Notable Things, of Sundry Sortes}, went through multiple editions from 1579 to 1631; the 1627 London edition provides a good match. There is no evidence that the works by Digges or Lupton were in Ashley’s collection.
\end{itemize}
the alphabetical, rather than geographical listing of the place names makes this unlikely.\footnote{Leif Isaksen kindly provided this information via email.}

Another miscellaneous excerpt of relevance is the underlined text (contemporaneous to the copying): “In Gesners Bibliotheca Jo. Capnio” followed by an excerpt from Conrad Gesner regarding De Verbo Mirifico by Johann Reuchlin (often referred to as Johannes Capnio). Ashley’s library contained at least eight works by Gesner, including the Bibliotheca Universa, and in which he underlined the same passage regarding Reuchlin.\footnote{Conrad Gesner, Bibliotheca Universalis (Zurich: Christopher Froscher, 1545–49), sig. Xx2v.} In his copy of De Verbo Mirifico, he underlined a section beginning Ex Iohanne Tritthemio: Dignus profecto qui solis literis, non etiam.\footnote{Johann Reuchlin, De Verbo Mirifico (Cologne: Eucharius, 1532), sig. A2r.} This excerpting and underlining provide the only definitive quoted reference to a book from his collection.

In addition to Gesner, Ashley credited other works he copied from printed works, such as Flavius Josephus, Manuel do Vale Moura, and Petrus Constantinus Albinius, among others. The lack of attribution for the experiments, medical recipes, oraisons, and ritual magic is likely because they were circulated anonymously and copied from unattributable manuscripts.\footnote{The only exception to this is his attribution of chapter 55 of the Cloud of Unknowing.} The margins and endpapers of his books display many examples where his marginalia referenced page/folio numbers from quoted printed sources, but I have not yet found an example where attribution was provided for manuscript material. For example, his copy of Hector Boece’s Descrittione del Regno di Scotia, et Delle Isole Sue Adjacenti (London: John Wolfe, 1588), contains his handwritten copy of an unpublished, anonymous text dated to the 1580s, The General Estate of the Scottish Commonwealth (fig. 6).\footnote{Versions of this work are in the British Library (Cotton MS Caligula B. IV 13, Add. MS 35844, and Harley MS 1423), the Bodleian Library (MS Ashmole 781), the National Library of Scotland (Adv. MS 33.2.36), and possible British Library, BL Sloane MS 3199, Concerning the State of Scotland. John Pinkerton, The History of Scotland From the Accession of the House of Stuart, vol. 2 (London: C. Dilly, 1797), 501.} His copy of Sir Dudley Digges’s The Defence of Trade contains his detailed notes about valuable goods brought back to England in May 1617 on the Red Dragon and
Figure 6. The General Estate of the Scottish Commonwealth as copied by Ashley on the end leaves of his copy of Hector Boece’s Descrizione del Regno di Scotia, et Delle Isole Sue Adjacenti (London: John Wolfe, 1588). London, Middle Temple Library, BAY L (FOLIOS).
Figure 7. Ashley’s copy of Thomas James’s catalogue, *Ecloga Oxonio-Cantabrigiensis* (London: Bishop and Norton, 1600) with annotations. London, Middle Temple Library, BAY L530.
Expedition; this information is not included in the captain’s logs, and its source remains unknown.\(^{77}\)

As there is no evidence that any of the miscellany’s passages were copied from books in Ashley’s own collection, he must have obtained them elsewhere, with the Bodleian Library being a potential source. In the introduction to *Almansor*, he wrote that he spent some weeks there, which he “found richly replenished with bookes” and manuscripts in a variety of languages.\(^{78}\) He signed the admission book between the entries for 11 December 1622 and 20 January 1623.\(^{79}\) His copy of Thomas James’s manuscript catalogue, *Eclaga Oxonio-Cantabrigiensis* (London: Bishop and Norton, 1600), is extensively annotated, with additional entries made in his hand (fig. 7).

The sharing of books and manuscripts was also common practice in this period, and Ashley himself noted lending Leandro Alberti’s *Descrittione di Tutta L’Italia, et Isole Pertinenti ad Essa* to a “Mr. Ro. Sherley Leg.”\(^{80}\) In particular, Ashley would have had easy access to materials in the possession of his fellow Inns of Court members. Examples of Inns of Court members sharing materials include Francis Bacon, who in 1609 asked to borrow copies of records from Robert Bowyer, Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London, noting that he would find it particularly useful if Bowyer had added to them.\(^{81}\) In the 1630s, Sir William Drake was lent an “unknown discourse” by a “Mr. Ashley.”\(^{82}\) Francis Davison compiled lists of manuscripts in his collection, which he lent to his contemporaries.\(^{83}\) John Selden


\(^{78}\) De Luna, *Almansor*, sig. long S4v.

\(^{79}\) Bodleian Library, *Liber Admissorum*, e.532, fol. 12v.

\(^{80}\) *Browne. 1624: A Prognostication for This Present Yeare of Grace* (London: [s.n.], 1624). This is likely Sir Robert Sherley (see biographical introduction).


\(^{82}\) Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 178.

\(^{83}\) British Library, Harley MS 298, fol. 159r (with thanks to Michelle O’Callaghan for sharing her photographs of this manuscript).
frequently consulted books in the libraries of Sir Robert Cotton and Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel.\textsuperscript{84} Selden of course had a large library, and while there is no evidence that Ashley made use of it, many of the passages in the miscellany were copied from printed books that Selden was known to own.\textsuperscript{85} This reveals a common interest in these texts, and it is not beyond the realm of speculation to postulate that Ashley accessed Selden’s library and vice versa, since life at the Temple made it possible to “know a lot of people within a relatively small social group.”\textsuperscript{86}

The copying and sharing of manuscripts and printed books confirmed and reinforced friendships and political and business alliances. There was a social capital ascribed to books and manuscripts and the knowledge required to interpret their contents. The circulation of texts helped create and strengthen bonds and emphasize socio-political ideals.\textsuperscript{87} The material copied into Boece, Digges, and the miscellany reveal how texts were circulated and shared in early modern London, and the breadth of information that was available to a scholar of means like Ashley.

**Expertise and Books of Secrets**

As discussed earlier, there is good evidence to show that the miscellany originally began with the blank leaf and parchment remnant at folio 285v and not with the *Salomonis Vinculum* as currently presented. If this observation is accurate, the miscellany starts with the Lactantius maxim regarding


\textsuperscript{85} These are: John of Salisbury, *Policraticus, Sive de Nugis Curialium* (Paris, 1513; Leiden, 1595; Leiden, 1639); Angelo Rocca, *De Campanis Commentarius* (Rome, 1612); Girolamo Maggi, *De Tintinnabulis Liber Postumus* (Hanover, 1608); G. A. Magini, *Ephemerides Coelestium Motuum* (Frankfurt, 1610).


\textsuperscript{87} Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 282.
the uncovering of truth and situates the miscellany among books of secrets. 88 Books of secrets encompassed a mix of topics and languages, esoteric phrases, odd symbols, and ciphers and were intended to uncover and explore the truth of hidden subjects, in order to demonstrate “the authority and expertise of the author.” 89 These authors were often “minor writers” who compiled secrets from other books and manuscripts into their own publication, transforming their commonplacing into “a respectable occupation.” 90 In the miscellany, Ashley excerpted from Lupton’s book of secrets, A Thousand Notable Things, and owned and annotated many books of secrets, including those by Giambattista della Porta, Leonardo Fioravanti, and Ramon Llull, among others. 91 In the preface to his translation, Of the Interchangeable Course, he wrote: “All the mysteries of God and secrets of nature are not discovered at one time. . . . That which is now hidden, with time will come to light; and our successors will wonder that we were ignorant of them.” 92 The Lactantius maxim, combined with this interest in the “secrets of nature,” highlights Ashley’s interest in exploring truth, unveiling unknown phenomena, and developing expertise. 93

By demystifying the unknown, books of secrets were functional items, and the overall use and purpose of Ashley’s miscellany would have been a practical one, with a focus on the value of the information it held. While impossible to prove, it is unlikely that Ashley used the miscellany to practice ritual magic or perform experiments. The miscellany’s spirit-conjuring

88 It is interesting to note that the maxim is used as an epigraph by John Selden in De diis Syris, and Thomas Browne in Pseudodoxia Epidemica.
91 Ashley had a copy of Plut’s The Jewel House of Art and Nature (1594), but it was missing from the collection by 1688. Middle Temple, MS MT.9/LCA/1, entry B28, and noted in the “books wanting” section.
93 As shown in figure 2, in the front end leaves of his copy of Seneca, Lucubrationes (Basel: Froben, 1515), Ashley copied sections from book 1, chapter 4, and book 5, chapter 9, of Lactantius’s Institutionum Divinarum. There is no evidence that Ashley owned a copy of this work. On the following end leaves he copied references from John of Salisbury’s Policraticus, which was referenced in the manuscript at fol. 266v (fig. 3).
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excerpts are incomplete, with instructions often lacking. Its necromantic passages (had they been put into practice) contravened the 1562 and 1603 Witchcraft Acts. Although ritual magic practitioners were rarely prosecuted (apart from magic rituals for treasure hunting and those considered treasonous), it does not seem feasible that Ashley, whose career as a lawyer was insecure, would have risked it further, particularly when living in a shared and cramped chamber at Middle Temple. Such conditions were also physically impractical for the preparation and execution of rituals that required circles “between nine and seventeen feet in diameter” and which could not be shared with others unless they were “worthy of sharing the secret.” The experiments often required exotic and strange ingredients that would have been difficult if not impossible to source, such as the tooth from a dead man’s skull (“Bacon’s charm against the toothache”) or the blood of a peacock (“to win at dice”). Lastly, the circle diagrams and other pictorial elements in the miscellany are sloppy and poorly drawn, lacking the carefully drawn straight lines and clearly delineated circles common to similar manuscripts discussed earlier, such as BL Sloane MS 3850 and Folger V.b.26.

We can also conclude that Ashley was not preparing medical prescriptions that would have required the ingredients and equipment specified in the miscellany’s recipes. Unlike Sir Hugh Plat (1552–1608, a member of Lincoln’s Inn), there is no evidence that Ashley had a workshop or laboratory outside of the Inn. Life at the Inn was a communal and collegiate one, with little privacy and space. Compilations, however, contained valuable pieces of information that were shared with the expectation of reward, either pecuniary or through the reciprocal lending of books, and these

94 The several penalties of conjuration, or Invocation of wicked Spirits, and Witchcraft, Enchantment, Charm or Sorcery, 5 Eliz. 1 c. 16; An Acte against conjuration witchcrafte and dealinge with evill and wicked spirits, 1 James I c. 12; Francis Young, Magic as a Political Crime in Medieval and Early Modern England. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 108.
95 Klaassen, Making Magic in Elizabethan England, 76.
96 Fols. 9r and 14v, respectively.
97 Malcolm Thick, Sir Hugh Plat: The Search for Useful Knowledge in Early Modern London (Totnes: Prospect Books, 2010), 281. It is entirely feasible that he had an apothecary prepare medications, but there is no evidence of this.
sources were often ephemeral, passing through intermediaries, such as astrologers, cunning folk, and healers. The compilation of medical recipes (whether through a miscellany or a collection of books) provided Ashley the opportunity to share medical remedies and health advice to others, including patrons.98 Medical advice during the early modern period was also often provided through oral exchange and correspondence. Such advice was transferred into notebooks and onto scraps of paper that were then recirculated, creating an important circle of information and a network of medical information gatherers.99 An example of Ashley being involved in such an exchange is the incomplete 1628 astrological consultation he had with Richard Napier. Napier was an astrologer and medical practitioner, and Ashley gave him one of his own books.100 Although Napier was known to share his books, there is currently no evidence that he did so with Ashley.101 As with the experiments, medical information was a currency, a commodity where the trustworthiness of the exchange depended on the owner/compiler of the recipes: the compilation’s value extended beyond the actual information itself.102

Gentlemen were also expected to know and understand the medicinal uses for herbs and plants. Edward Herbert, 1st Baron of Cherbury, wrote that gentlemen should “have some knowledge in medicine” and “know the nature of all herbs and plants . . . made for the use of man.”103 The miscellany’s medical recipes mentioned a wide variety of botanical ingredients (holly, plantain, rosemary, and stitchwort, to name a few) that would have assisted him in this goal. Understanding herbs and medicine also enabled

102 Leong and Pennell, “Recipe Collections,” 133–34.
103 Stobart, *Household Medicine*, 82.
Ashley to become an informed consumer “in the mixed medical economy of the period,” avoiding exploitation from any ignorance in medical matters.\textsuperscript{104} When he was thirty-eight, Ashley fell victim to two French surgeons who claimed to be \textit{punctum aureum} experts.\textsuperscript{105} This was a dangerous and ineffective way to repair hernia sacs, involving passing a gold wire through the rupture.\textsuperscript{106} Ashley was treated by them unsuccessfully for several weeks, and they tore his scrotum. In addition to the books in his collection and the miscellany’s recipes for urinary problems that have already been discussed, he had at least one book on treating hernias by surgery.\textsuperscript{107} By compiling and reading medical information from a variety of sources, Ashley gained the expertise required to better equip himself in his engagements with the medical marketplace.

\textit{Conclusion}

Robert Ashley did not enjoy great public success in his life, but he did build a truly impressive library containing rare and useful works. Newberry MS 5017 is a crucial element of that collection, complementing and enhancing it. The information that Ashley chose to copy into this miscellany and the books he acquired collectively reflect his intent to present himself as an expert, acting as a conduit for the provision and interpretation of complicated, useful, and valuable knowledge. He did not spare any “labour or Expence in procuring the Principall [writers] in their severall languages,” collecting works which one “can not soe readily fynd elsewhere.”\textsuperscript{108} In the prefatory material to his translations, he often stated their potential to be useful, whether for financial gain or the pursuit of knowledge. \textit{Cochin-China} was translated so it be “usefull to our countreymen that trade and traffique in those Easterne parts”; in \textit{Almansor} he wrote that he had spent

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{104} Leong and Pennell, “Recipe Collections,” 146. \\
\textsuperscript{105} Sloane MS 2131, fol. 19r. \\
\textsuperscript{106} George Arnaud de Ronsil, \textit{A Dissertation on Hernias, or Ruptures} (London: A. Millar, 1748), ix. \\
\textsuperscript{107} Pierre Franco, \textit{Petit Traité Contenant une des Parties Principalles de Chirurgie, Laquelle les Chirurgiens Hernieres Exercent} (Lyon, 1556). \\
\textsuperscript{108} MS MT.9/RAW/1, fol. 1.
\end{flushleft}
his quiet moments gaining knowledge of foreign countries and their languages in order to be “made partaker of the wisdome of those nations.” Early modern barristers have been described as “market-driven men,” and Ashley’s library and miscellany collectively voiced his “aspirations and desires,” containing as they do a complicated mix of knowledge and variety of specialist works. He would have been the conduit through which these materials were accessed, enabling him to present himself as a learned interpreter of their content and an unveiler of their truths.

A miscellany’s unity is “provided by the individual sponsoring it, for reasons and according to criteria that were usually not articulated.” Unfortunately there is not enough primary material, such as letters or diary entries, to definitively reveal Ashley’s reasons for compiling this miscellany and noting this particular set of information. When it is investigated holistically, however, we can draw sensible conclusions regarding its purpose and method of creation. Having identified Ashley as the scribe means that the miscellany cannot be studied as a standalone piece: understanding it requires the modern reader to examine it in tandem with his library, life experiences, and the paratexts in his translations.

Evaluating the miscellany in these contexts reveals that Ashley was not a cunning man, healer, or magician. Placing it amidst his fellow book and manuscript collectors and readers reveals the information networks existing in and around the Inns of Court that he was able to exploit during his long tenure at the Middle Temple. Early modern miscellanies like Newberry MS 5017 reflect and reveal these information networks by exemplifying the gathering and transmission of information and knowledge that was so prevalent during the early modern period in London. They highlight the rich and diverse book and manuscript culture of early modern London, and how collectors and disseminators of information amassed, circulated, and exploited knowledge.

109 Cristoforo Borri, Cochin-China (London: Robert Raworth, 1633), sig. A1r; De Luna, Almansor, sig. long S4v.
110 Ane Ohrvik, Medicine, Magic and Art in Early Modern Norway: Conceptualizing Knowledge (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 149.
111 Ann Blair, Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 68.