

The Communion of the Book: Auctions and their Communities

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My doctoral project studies book collecting as a memorial practice. I am interested in how both libraries and the practice of collecting created the posthumous legacies of early modern scholars. Learned identity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was defined by the transnational community of intellectuals which was known as the Republic of Letters. Books were central in shaping the canon of individuals belonging to this community. Yet the legacy of scholars was closely tied to death and memory, since it rested not just on the works they wrote, but also on the books they possessed. This paper gives an overview of a chapter of my dissertation. It will address the larger context of the project, before discussing the chapter on the organisation of book auctioning in the Hanseatic City of Lübeck. The seventeenth century saw the emergence of these public sales as commemorative events. Most cities of the Holy Roman Empire issued printed ordinances to regulate the new trade. While Lübeck never published a printed mandate, procedures of book auctioning allow a view of what lies under the surface of print, and what disputes led to the regulation of the sales. Discussing tensions within Lutheran Protestantism, this paper argues that, in Lübeck, the evolution of auctions as commemorative events developed out of a religious form of private meeting. I will finish my presentation with a series of questions on my chapter.