A CURIOUS COLLECTION OF VISITORS: TRAVELS TO EARLY MODERN CABINETS OF CURIOSITY
AND MUSEUMS IN ENGLAND, 1660-1800

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Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2014

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The idea of curiosity has evolved over time and is a major building-block in the foundation and expansion of museums and their precursors, cabinets of curiosity. These proto-museums began in Italy and spread throughout Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Cabinets of curiosity and museums transformed as visitors traveled to burgeoning collections across the Continent and England. Individuals visited curiosities for a variety of reasons. Some treated outings to collections as social events in which they could see others in their social circles and perhaps rise in social status if seen by the correct people. Others were merely curious and hoped to see rare, astonishing, monstrous, and beautiful objects. Scholars of the era often desired to discover new items and ideas, and discuss scientific and philosophical matters. The British Isles are removed from the main body of Europe, but still play a major role in the history of collecting. A number of private collectors and the eventual foundation of the British Museum contributed seminally to the ever-increasing realm of curiosities and historic, cultural, and scientific artifacts. The collectors and collections of Oxford and London and its surrounding areas, drew a diverse population of visitors to their doors. Individuals, both foreign and local, female and male, visitors and collectors in Early Modern England chose to actively participate in the formation of a collecting culture by gathering, visiting, discussing, writing about, and publishing on collections.
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INTRODUCTION

What would a museum be without visitors? It would be a warehouse for artwork, science, and antiquities, merely collecting dust—without visitors, museums could not exist as anything more than personal collections. However, museums of today are different than their predecessors; they, along with their visitors, have evolved over time. Thus, if a modern individual were to visit an eighteenth-century museum, he or she would have quite a different experience than a visit to the same museum in the twenty-first century. According to Giles Waterfield, one of the major differences in early-seventeenth century collections was the lack of specialized museums, whereas current museums often focus on art, antiquities, history or science; the virtuosi of the time instead focused on encyclopedic collections with a morality-based approach intended to glorify God and the creations of the universe.¹ The great museums of the world, along with their collections and visitors, continually undergo periods of growth and transition throughout time; however, there is no sudden change from private cabinets of curiosity to vast national galleries open to all. Even with changes made to collections and how they are viewed, modern collectors can request that their private collections be incorporated into larger public collections after a piece is given as a gift or after the collector dies.

Additionally, the nomenclature revolving around collecting, collections, and museums transformed over the centuries. In ancient Greece, a museum denoted a temple dedicated to the nine Muses—the ancient goddess of the arts, knowledge, and inspiration. The Renaissance

heralded a large shift in the meaning of “museum”;” so large that even the time period functioned as a museum, in which individuals collected cultural and intellectual items and ideas to display for public and private consumption even in daily life.² Outside of Italy, in England, the word “museum” in the seventeenth century often referred to the study, library, or cabinet of a scholar or man of leisure.³ A gentleman of leisure with the time and wealth to collect rarities became “what he collected; he was a ‘curiosity,’ a rare individual who deserved admiration for his very anomalousness.” ⁴ By putting his self-declared uniqueness on display, the English virtuoso also categorized himself as part of a particular milieu as narrowly defined as the objects that he collected. Despite the private nature of a wealthy man’s cabinet, he could invite visitors to enter his private realm in order to show off his wonders.

Notwithstanding the often disparate items in a collection, collectors generally had some personal method of organizing their objects for more pleasurable and more cohesive viewing; however, the less scholarly collectors often emphasized aesthetics rather than science.⁵ Many of today’s public museums have their roots in these humbler, privately owned collections, often originally referred to as cabinets of curiosity, which emerged in sixteenth-century Italy, well

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before appearing anywhere else in Western Europe.⁶ Purchased piecemeal or as a whole by other individual collectors through private transactions or public auctions, cabinets of curiosity often found their way into a different niche in the ever-expanding world of collecting.

The elite of society first took up collecting on a widespread scale due to their monetary resources, their time, and their strong desire to possess ancient items in order to gain knowledge and understanding of classical Greece and Rome, partly because knowledge of one’s ancestors and their surroundings gave power over that past and the objects belonging to it.⁷

![Ulisse Aldrovandi](image)

Figure 1. Painting by Agostino Carracci, *Ulisse Aldrovandi* (date unknown)

Hand-in-hand with the accumulation of antiquities went the collecting and intense study of the natural world; knowledge and possession of items from nature demonstrated mastery of that realm as well as the past. One of the leading collectors of sixteenth-century Italy was Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605). His well-visited collection and early forms of cataloguing, description, and display helped cultivate the fledgling discipline of natural history.⁸ Due to his fame

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⁸ Idem. See Figure 1 at right. A painting by Agostino Carracci, *Ulisse Aldrovandi* (date unknown).
throughout Italy, Aldrovandi’s collection also attracted the attention of foreign travellers who then spread his methods to their homes abroad.

Aldrovandi’s meticulous record-keeping provided an unusual resource for future scholars—he (usually) kept detailed ledgers of visitors to his museum. Some other naturalists of the time also kept logs of the guests who visited their collections, but none were as extensive and comprehensive as Aldrovandi’s. It was of particular interest to Aldrovandi to preserve a record of the important men of the world who visited his cabinet of nature and curiosities, creating a second collection of as much, or more, importance than the collection of physical objects. He listed wealthy, powerful, honorable, and intelligent men in his visitors’ books, which document 1,579 visitors over several decades.9 His records were not all inclusive—Aldrovandi chose with care the guests to record in his logs to boost his and his collection’s reputation—those lacking social status did not appear in the pages of his guest book.10 His most detailed records provided notes on the visitors’ occupations, names, dates of visit, and the reason for their visit; other (less important or influential) guests were limited to their signature only. Aldrovandi’s guests were illustrious enough to include one (unnamed) pope, over 200 other clergy, 5 princes, 21 professors, over 900 scholars, 87 doctors, and one named woman.11

The exclusion of women from official recognition in the collecting culture of the Renaissance was standard practice and the conspicuous absence of female visitors from

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10 Ibid., 144.
11 Ibid., 140-41. The woman listed is Ippolita Paleotti, a Bolognese poet whom Aldrovandi admired. Other women were certainly visitors; however, they were not deemed worthy enough for Aldrovandi’s collection of names.
Aldrovandi’s records strongly highlights this common convention. Aldrovandi did not prohibit
women from visiting his collection but he also made no particular effort to add them to his
visitors book, indicating the lack of status that women had in his realm. Aldrovandi’s and his
contemporaries’ treatment of women in scientific settings suggest their perception of women
as more foreign than any man from a distant land. Aldrovandi was (marginally) more open in
his acceptance of women at his museum than the men presiding over other collections—the
Roman College museum and other museums of the age did not admit women. Women of
worth were not to engage in the scientific conversation of the day, but to be an audience to it
only.\textsuperscript{12}

Aldrovandi’s records help create a social graph that in part defines a man of leisure. The
men who visited Aldrovandi’s collection had the time to do so, and those who travelled from far
distances had even more time and more financial resources to spend. Two thirds of those
recorded in his guest book had or were pursuing a university degree, emphasizing a kinship
among the realms of collecting, learning, and knowledge—men of wealth and leisure had the
time to be curious and they had the time and resources to pursue their desired endeavors.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12}Findlen, \textit{Possessing Nature}, 143-44. Aldrovandi did not include the 1576 visit of Caterina Sforza in his
log of despite her prominence. This attitude toward women in places of knowledge and learning is
evident still in Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach’s account of his travels in England, which I examine later.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid, 145.
CURIOSITY

Collections and cabinets of curiosities grew out of a general curiosity about the world, its contents, and its inhabitants, and they seem to be a direct result of the new scientific and artistic culture that developed during the Renaissance and Enlightenment. The collection of scholarly work on curiosity has grown over the past three decades as academics have delved deeper into the realms of social and cultural history.\(^\text{14}\) As the old adage “curiosity killed the cat” indicates, there has long been some stigma associated with curiosity because a curious nature implies that one is not satisfied—there is something more to know or possess.

The Church Fathers associated curiosity with pride and an eventual turning away from God. In classical times, those deemed too curious could be seen as “a savior or a monster, for both trample the conventions of nature, culture, and society,” thus emphasizing the ambiguous and dual nature of the reputation of curiosity from an early time.\(^\text{15}\) Many cultures have fables and tales of curious tricksters or trickster gods who walk a fine line between benevolence and malevolence due to their inherent curious nature.\(^\text{16}\) According to Benedict, curious items and individuals hold immense value to society, but they can be dangerous because “they confuse distinctions between the abstract and material and they have the potential to usurp common culture with idiosyncratic concerns,” drawing the attention of society away from needful objects and situations that strengthen the community and focusing it instead on objects of some material value, but of dubious moral worth that aggrandize the individual.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^\text{15}\) Ibid., 2-3. Benedict specifically mentions Augustine’s thoughts on curiosity.
\(^\text{16}\) Examples include Brer Rabbit, Anansi, Hermes, Loki, and the Native American Coyote to name a few.
\(^\text{17}\) Ibid., 3.
Throughout the Renaissance, some of curiosity’s stigma fell away. It gradually became more culturally and socially acceptable to explore distant lands, examine remote peoples, and gather undiscovered objects of burgeoning cultural and historical significance for display and examination. Early modern society had the tendency to view curiosity as “imperialistic and aggressive” and as a direct product of the age of discovery; this description of curiosity creates a connection between the object or idea being examined and the individual viewing the object, describing it as a “mirroring quality” that not only links the two, but “pits them against each other” as the person begins to explore and come to terms with new ideas and perceptions of reality and themselves.18

The words “curious” and “curiosity” held great importance in intellectual and artistic spheres of influence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but they eventually disappeared in the nineteenth century due to the Victorian virtues of propriety, respectability, and improving life through scientific advances. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, “curious” and “curiosity” had more detailed and nuanced meanings than they tend to today, which included “careful... [attentiveness] to detail,” enthusiasm for learning and new information, and the ability to arouse interest due to a particular quality or novelty—all of these facets of meaning were considered virtues. Persons of intelligence were expected to display curious natures as an inherent aspect of higher intellect. The shift in meaning of “curious(ity)” over the decades to mean in most respects astonishing or bizarre explains much about modern culture and the virtue of curiosity for curiosity’s sake, or for the purpose of

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acquiring knowledge is often the mark of a pariah. Horace Walpole (1717-1797) expressed a less positive view of his curious contemporaries indicating that “their minds [are] totally vacant” so they flail about continually to find “something new to fill every moment” but they will never be satisfied due to the lack of depth or substance to their thoughts and the fact that they have no true goal—“they are like young birds in a nest, that gape and gobble, and gape again.”

In a seemingly more industrious display of curiosity than the picture Walpole paints, collectors gathered objects to display for others with curious natures to view. Some viewed curious objects as a means to expand knowledge, but also as a way for both curious items and curious beholders to be deemed monstrosities because they stepped outside the bounds of conventional society. The more conservative minds continued to view curiosity with suspicion and label it immoral due to its association with pride and forbidden knowledge. Even those who saw the benefits of curiosity recognized that the very act of being curious “is always transgressive, always a sign of the rejection of the known as inadequate, incorrect, even uninteresting.”

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20 Horace Walpole, *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence with Mary and Agnes Berry*, ed. W.S. Lewis and A. Dayle Wallace, vol. 12, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1944), 269. Hudson’s rose-colored description of curiosity as completely positive is in stark contrast to this quote from Horace Walpole. Individuals will always hold differing opinions about a subject especially if one’s character is brought under scrutiny. Particularly Hudson’s last comment on the general apathy of today’s culture seems rather heavy-handed and over-simplified.
21 Benedict, 4.
22 One of the oldest stories of curiosity, pride, weakness, and destruction is the story of Eve and the serpent in the Garden of Eden. After the serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and then gave Adam the fruit to eat as well, the two were cast out of the Garden, and an angel wielding a flaming sword barred their way back (Genesis 3:1-24). I will explore more associations with curious women and female museum visitors later.
23 Idem.
As exploration of the world continued and trade, commerce, and colonialism expanded, early modern society connected curiosity to commerce, control, and social mobility—or at least a desire for social mobility.\textsuperscript{24} Despite this connection with growth and wealth, curiosity still held negative undertones because of the heightened sense of wealth disparity. Those who collected art and antiquities and curated personal cabinets removed “valuable objects [from] the sphere of public meaning” in order to construct their own personal realms of power, which mirror the influence of the collected objects. Wealthy individuals kept items of value and interest out of the reach of the common people, thus demonstrating their fiscal and social authority.\textsuperscript{25} People in the lower classes of society who were able to view private collections were still conscious (maybe even more so) of the social gap between themselves and the owners of the objects that they viewed. But the advent of publicly accessible museums assisted in returning to a wider population objects that previously had private owners who kept these objects out of the reach of most individuals.

Even though negative connotations of curiosity and collecting remained, the widespread antipathy with which curiosity was held began to decline in the mid-eighteenth century owing to the spread of curiosity as a whole and as a commodity. The Age of Imperialism and the subsequent colonization of the Americas, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific along with the completion of a young man’s right of passage by undertaking the Grand Tour of Europe contributed to the acceptance and even glorification of curiosity.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{24} Benedict, 22-23. There is still a negative undertone of ambition and usurpation of the natural order.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 158.
EARLY COLLECTIONS AND COLLECTING IN ENGLAND

Due to limited direct contact with the Continent, England took longer to cultivate cabinets of curiosity; however, when the aristocracy in England began to travel the Continent (and Italy in particular) more frequently for pleasure and education, the idea and practice of collecting and displaying items of art, antiquity, and natural history grew in popularity. Early English collectors were not always as sophisticated and discerning as their (more experienced) Italian counterparts as to what should belong in a cabinet of curiosities; thus, early English cabinets could be described as an “exuberant hodgepodge” of rare and peculiar items.

One of the early, notable collectors in England, Thomas Howard (1585-1646), Earl of Arundel, and his wife, Lady Alethea Howard (1585-1654), collected primarily art and sculpture of the Renaissance, along with objects of the Classical Era. Arundel also sent employees and friends, on travels to acquire more items for his collection. As Arundel’s employees journeyed to collect items for their employer, they also procured items of interest for themselves. Other wealthy men followed Arundel’s example and employed their own retainers to bring back rare and astonishing items for their collections. One famous example of this practice is John Tradescant the elder, who worked for Robert Cecil, first Earl of Salisbury, Robert’s son William, the Duke of Buckingham, and Charles I’s wife. As he traveled for his noble employers, he easily procured items of interest for his own garden and collection—these miscellaneous items

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28 Swann, 2.
29 Arnold, 16. The first time Howard travelled abroad was 1612 and then again with his wife and Inigo Jones in 1613. During his travels in Italy, Howard gained a great appreciation for the Italian culture and gradually transformed his English home into a replica of an Italian palace and garden with his accumulation of manuscripts, paintings, sculpture, gems, coins, and jewelry.
created the foundation for the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, established between 1678 and
1683. Tradescant was not the only agent to also collect significant pieces for himself while
acquiring items for his employer. Arundel and his peers passed along the desire to collect in a
phenomenon known as “social mimicry,” which ultimately became a driving force to create new
museums in the first half of the seventeenth century.30

By the end of the seventeenth century, collecting had become such a salient and vested
practice within society that John Evelyn recommended “that ‘Diligent and Curious Collectors,’
including Tradescant” should be honored by having medals (highly collected items) cast in their
likeness.31 As collecting gained a toehold in English society between 1600 and 1640, and
collectors emerged from parts of society other than the aristocracy, the act of collecting and
the objects collected developed a more intellectual hue—collected knowledge (or “sources of
knowledge”) gained preeminence over the collected objects.32

Sir Hans Sloane was one of the men who rose from the middle ranks of society to
embrace collecting specimens for the sake of knowledge. He, like Howard, also employed men
to gather specimens of interest for his private collection, which became the basis for the British
Museum in 1753. Sloane willed his collection to the British government for a sum of £20,000
upon his death in 1753 at the age of 92. Had the British government refused to purchase
Sloane’s extensive collection, the executors of Sloane’s estate received instructions to offer the
collection to the Royal Society of London, the University of Oxford, the College of Physicians in
Edinburgh, and then to the Royal Academies of Science at Paris, St. Petersburg, Berlin and

30 Arnold, 19.
31 Swann, 1.
32 Arnold, 20.
Sloane was a physician, a member of the Royal Society (he succeeded Sir Isaac Newton as president of the Royal Society in 1727), an avid collector, and a scholar. His love of collecting the natural world began at an early age with shells and various specimens around his childhood home in Ireland. His passion grew, when, in his twenties, the second duke of Albemarle and governor of Jamaica, appointed Sloane as his personal physician.

Sloane travelled to Jamaica in 1687 and while there kept a detailed journal of his activities, his patients, and the flora and fauna of the island. He also gathered and preserved many specimens of the native plant- and animal-life. Upon his return to England—after the 1688 death of the duke—Sloane compiled his journal and drawings into a two-volume book about the island. Sloane continued collecting, employing collectors, and welcoming visitors to view his collection until his death. Sir Hans Sloane’s collection had such a good reputation that he accrued a number of prominent visitors to his collection during his long life, including

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35 Sloane did not complete the second volume of *A Voyage to Jamaica* until 1725.
George Frederich Handel and Carl Linnaeus. Sloane and his prestigious collection also had the honor of receiving the prince and princess of Wales as visitors—*The Gentleman’s Magazine: and historical chronicle* reported the noteworthy visit in great detail.  

Sloane was only one of many scholars who collected manuscripts, art, antiquities, scientific specimens, natural history, and miscellaneous curiosities, and who were part of various intellectual circles and institutions, like the Republic of Letters and the Royal Society of London. Formally founded in 1660 by groups of physicians and natural philosophers (and granted a Royal Charter by King Charles II), the Society helped to explore and promote the new sciences of the day. To help document, preserve, and keep records of its findings, the Royal Society kept a collection of scientific specimens and oddities. Despite being a collection established and maintained by a private society, the rules permitted other scholars and men of science to view the collection. In fact, the Royal Society’s Repository was unique in its commitment to remaining available to the whole Royal Society even though it had previously been the collection of one man, Robert Hubert—“it was one of the first attempts at a scholarly approach to organizing, acquiring and housing such collections in Britain.”  

One scholar, in an article exploring the collecting strategies of the Royal Society, believes that the Repository of the Royal Society fell into disarray over the years due (in part) to the rise in popularity of Hans Sloane’s collection. Sloane received donations of specimens to add to his ever-growing collection in larger quantities and of a better quality than the donations

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37 Burnett and Sloan, 81-2.
that the Royal Society received. Thomas posits that one of the factors contributing to the more highly favored status of Sloane’s collection (as compared to the collection of the Royal Society) is due to the fact that Sloane’s collection was much more neatly displayed and more logically organized and catalogued.\textsuperscript{39} Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, in his travel account of his 1710 journey to England, describes his experiences in both collections and is overwhelmingly more positive in his description of his experience with Sloane and his collection.

Uffenbach’s travel account is one of many similar accounts by various writers that detail the fantastic objects on display in myriad private and public cabinets of curiosity and collections throughout England in the eighteenth century. Though the phenomenon of collecting and displaying one’s collection came later to England than to the rest of Europe, the practice grew steadily more popular on the island as the British empire grew and came into more immediate contact with various cultures across the globe. Arguably, collections became more established and more popular as a way for wealthy men of leisure to display their wealth (like Howard). While there would always be men whose priority in collecting was this purpose, there arose another generation of collectors (like Sloane) who collected and displayed their curiosities in order to increase knowledge of the world, its inhabitants, and its creator.

\textsuperscript{39} Thomas, 6-7.
THE PURPOSE OF VISITORS

Visitors to museums and collections are a defining characteristic of such establishments. Without individuals to view them, the spectacular, odd, rare, and beautiful objects would fall into relative obscurity. Visitors to collections give meaning to objects outside of their intrinsic value, and objects without a history and without some value in society merely occupy space. In the same way that visitors give value to collections, collections are capable of improving the visitors who choose to view them.

Visitors tend to form connections between objects in collections, especially noticeable in modern collections due to new organizational and display techniques. Items in older collections often met with haphazard display and had no readily apparent cohesive factor. Sometimes in eighteenth-century collections of the wealthy and particularly dedicated collectors, one could find themes and objects grouped together in a manner that promoted similarities (like category of object, or location found in the world) rather than differences.40 A collection could promote learning in visitors because of the connections being built and the knowledge catalogued in their minds, thus, supporting a link “between objects and knowledge.”41 Learning is possible outside of a text from a classic philosopher—one could see in person the artifacts of that classic philosopher’s life or objects from exotic realms and learn through material objects in addition to literary texts, and through this process forming a more concrete connection to the past. In fact, scientists and philosophers frequently used the collection of the duchess of Portland as a laboratory of sorts and a place for inquiry, discussion,

40 Sloboda, 462.
41 Ibid., 463.
discovery, and learning.\textsuperscript{42} Visits from artists, scientists, and philosophers to Portland’s
collection became events at which interesting objects and new ideas exchanged hands and the
“aesthetic and intellectual interest” that Portland and her guests fostered at these gatherings
underscored the realm of the museum as a space for sociability. Portland’s collection was
notable in the vast quantity of “raw materials” available for artists, scientists, and philosophers
to interact with. Portland used these visits to engage in and facilitate the exchange of ideas and
to encourage her guests to collaborate with each other to produce “new forms of knowledge”
as they created, discussed, and displayed objects and art.\textsuperscript{43}

Paula Findlen depicts visitors as disciples or acolytes of a religion of knowledge. As a
repository for vast amounts of knowledge, the museum became a temple similar to the ancient
edifices, and a tangible way for humanist philosophers to groom new followers.\textsuperscript{44} Knowledge
could be a main priority for visitors because knowledge was also a way to gain power in society.
The knowledge of an object came through seeing the object—knowing it—and thus owning it.
Visiting a cabinet of curiosities was the next best thing to possessing items that would
otherwise be out of reach for the common visitor.\textsuperscript{45} When one sees rarities on display, one
sees a miniature version of the universe, which was a primary purpose of Renaissance cabinets
of curiosity. In early modern Europe, however, the display and viewing of cabinets slowly grew
beyond the bounds of the elite. Gradually, private and public doors opened to allow other
members of society to possess new knowledge. Those in less-privileged social groups could

\textsuperscript{42} Sloboda, 463. Sloboda terms objects “catalysts of discourse” and finds that the intellectual
conversations that revolved around objects were just as useful as the conversations that arose from
print sources. (464)
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 463-64.
\textsuperscript{44} Findlen, “The Museum,” 68.
\textsuperscript{45} Benedict, 162.
now travel the world through exotic objects taken from overseas—they could know the world without needing the wealth of previous eras. Thus, museums and collections could play a role in equalizing social disparities by allowing all groups to see—and symbolically own—rare objects of beauty and value.46

Visitors to distant cabinets rose in status with each successive collection they gained entrance to and they also helped lend an air of credibility to a collection and its collector.47 As word spread about a particular collection, more visitors would seek it out, thus raising its esteem in the eyes of society—a serious collector based his reputation and authority on the reception of his cabinet. Not only did visitors lend credibility to a collection, they made the collection more valuable monetarily with their interest.48 Along the same lines, visitors to cabinets of curiosity might be motivated to see a collection because of an obsession or an obsessive personality. Mirroring and amplifying some of the same qualities, systematically arranged collections can be the result of a personal obsession of the collector. Visitors similar obsessive tendencies might visit a collection because they may not have had the means to collect rare objects as an outlet for their infatuation, so they fulfilled their need by viewing others’ collections.49

Visitors often formed some kind of connection with the objects that they viewed, attempting to make room for new objects and ideas in their worldview while striving to retain

46 Benedict, 17-8.
47 Swann, 43.
48 Benedict, 43. “By watching or reading [curious texts and displays], audiences enter the rarified world of the curiosity-maker: their own interest confers value on the curiosities they witness, as these curiosities, once witnessed, reciprocally raise their status.”
their own identity.\textsuperscript{50} One scholar explains that the objects in a collection have the ability to
draw us metaphorically closer to a distant object, place or idea in the same way that a religious
relic has the power to draw our minds to a higher plane and a higher meaning. Some secular
objects in a collection, and most sacred relics, are able to “form a bridge with heaven and
immortality.” However, other objects are more mundane in nature and merely form a bridge
across space and/or time. In the same way that collections exert a compelling power over those
who experienced the collection, the collector displayed authority over the collection by
choosing what to include or exclude. The objects chosen to be in the collection may have no
inherent value, but, when chosen, they acquired a certain significance. The collector presents
his most important items to those eager to view the collection as a means to attain insight into
the world of knowledge.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} Benedict, 4.
\textsuperscript{51} Blom, 166-67.
KINDS OF VISITORS

Individuals who visited collections (both private and public) viewed these collections for a variety of reasons: some went to see and be seen, since visiting could be a social event and might increase one’s standing in social circles by obtaining an invitation to view a collection; some were merely curious and wished to see the fantastical items on display; others wished to visit for scholarly reasons—to do research and increase their own knowledge. In order to control the actions of the visitors as they saw fit, the trustees of the British Museum published guidelines for viewing its collection that they required the public to obey, or risk a permanent ban on further visits. In his travels in Oxford, Uffenbach recounts many of the protocols that he and his brother had to observe while visiting the various libraries, collections, and museums at the university. One of his most frequent complaints was his frustration with the lack of courtesy shown to him by the British librarians and museum attendants throughout his journeys—not just in Oxford. Uffenbach’s criticisms about his experiences visiting collections in Oxford and London also extended to his fellow visitors; namely, women and those in lower social classes.

Female Visitors and Collectors

During the eighteenth century, the place of women in collecting and viewing collections was not at the forefront; however, some notable exceptions to the rule existed, and these women helped open doors for future females interested in the primarily male world of collections. In 1680, John Evelyn wrote an account in his personal diary of a trip to the Royal

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52 Statutes and Rules, Relating to the Inspection and Use of the British Museum and for the Better Security and Preservation of the Same (London: Dryden Leach, 1768), 9-29. The docents at the British Museum escorted anyone caught breaking any of the rules out of the Museum, and added their names to a list of banned visitors.
Society’s Repository in which he met a bishop from Ireland who was with the daughter of a friend of Evelyn’s. Evelyn comments that “she seemed to be a knowing Woman beyond the ordinary talent of her sex,” implying that her intelligence was somehow uncommon or unexpected. Had she not been uncommonly intelligent, she would have gained nothing from a visit to the Repository, or she might not have gained entrance to the Repository at all.\(^53\) Evelyn was willing to grant that a woman could be intelligent enough to comprehend the items in a scientific collection, but believed that the woman herself was a curiosity. His off-hand comment is less abrasive than those of others, such as Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, who makes multiple disparaging remarks about women and the uneducated masses visiting the collections in Oxford.\(^54\) Uffenbach’s views on women and their ability (or lack thereof) to understand and appreciate the objects before them are apparent. Such attitudes were also present in the early Italian collections where women often could not gain admission.\(^55\) Women who wrote accounts of their visits to Sloane’s collection in the 1730s through the 1750s described a pleasant reception from their host. Overall, Sloane displayed a more positive view toward women visiting collections than Uffenbach.\(^56\)

This paper’s primary purpose is not to explore gender, but this is an important aspect of the history of collections. The realm of collecting was consciously a male realm, as a subset of the whole world (which was a patriarchal world) during the time early collections evolved. In


\(^{55}\) Findlen, *Possessing Nature*, 140-44.

\(^{56}\) Anne Marie du Bocage and the princess of Wales have documented visits to Sloane’s collection. Sloane also kept up correspondence with female travellers and natural historians of the age like Maria Sibylla Merian.
the Renaissance, the Italian *studio*, “a space reserved within the home for scholarly activity,” was an “exclusively masculine space, an image borne out by the relative absence of women in the sphere of collecting...”57 Men did not allow women to actively participate in the world of collecting; instead men relegated women to the display shelves as objects for collecting. This objectification of women in collections is due, in part, to the unearthing (and later display) of erotic artifacts from exotic lands, which lent sexualized undertones to the collections in which they resided.58

Benedict points out that gender is an integral issue in the discussion of curiosity in the early modern period because curiosity “frets at the margins between man and non-man” while at the same time “gender draws heightened scrutiny because it constitutes a central battlefield of cultural power.”59 Women began to embrace curiosity as their own cultural ambitions grew, in turn threatening the sole claim that men held over the scientific realm, moving women out of their “proper” status and into the intellectual world thus, adding to the sexualized connotations of curiosity. Despite a slowly growing trend of female collectors, scholars, and cultural influencers, gossip became the epitome of women’s curiosity and the negative associations with female gossip became ever more fixed.60 If the information gained through curiosity and a curious nature could only be used for the sake of destructive gossip (as believed by men) then the curiosity of women must be detrimental to the legitimacy of curiosity, collecting, and

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58 Benedict, 156-57.
59 Ibid., 119.
60 Idem.
Benedict indicates that it is not the femaleness of curiosity that makes curiosity a potentially destructive force, it is the inherent qualities of curiosity itself that render it a force for both creation and destruction within realms of knowledge and realms of culture.62

*Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, Second Duchess of Portland*

![Portrait by Christian Friedrich Zincke, Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, Duchess of Portland (1738)](portrait.png)

A notable exception to the perceived trend of negative female curiosity was Margaret Cavendish Bentinck (1715-1785), second duchess of Portland, whose private collection was almost beyond compare in eighteenth-century England.63 In the late eighteenth century, the duchess of Portland was a prominent figure in serious collecting circles, and a member of the Blue-Stocking Society—a group (primarily) of women who pursued artistic, literary, and scholarly ambitions under the patronage of Queen Charlotte. The duchess divided her impressively large collection between her residences in London and Buckinghamshire where

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61 Benedict., 101. Men were particularly concerned with women’s curiosity as a tool for gaining sexual knowledge, thereby gaining sexual power as well.

62 Ibid., 19. “Whether interpreted as the masculine activities of collecting and of scientific experimentation, or as the feminine quality of impious peeping and unregulated spying, curiosity stirs up both cultural pride and resistance.”

her friends and contemporaries enjoyed visiting frequently from the 1760s until her death. 64 Portland’s collection was a pleasing mix of both natural history and antiquities and curiosities from around the globe. Caroline Lybbe Powys (1738-1817), a prolific visitor of English country homes, wrote of her 1769 visit to Portland’s Buckinghamshire estate, Bulstrode: “This place is well worth seeing, a most capital collection of pictures, numberless other curiosities, and works of taste in which the Duchess has displayed her well-known ingenuity….I was never more entertain’d than at Bulstrode.”65 In a recollection of her visit to Bulstrode in 1760, the duchess of Northumberland indicated the presence of “a thousand Curiositys” in the duchess’s dressing room alone.66 This reference to a collection in a private dressing room recalls the earlier practices of men creating their collections in their studies—the most private of chambers—while still maintaining the desire to share their wonders and curiosities with visitors to their homes; thus, intermingling private and public spaces on a very intimate level.67 The duchess’s dressing room full of curiosities indicates her encroachment upon the established male stronghold of collecting even at its most seminal form. However, the Duchess of Portland also shaped her collecting style to fit a more feminine mold. Demonstrated clearly in Portland’s collection were the most acceptable forms of female collecting: Botanical and natural curiosities and china.68

65 Quoted in, Sloboda, 455.
66 Sloboda, 460.
67 Findlen, “The Museum,” 69
68 Sloboda, 457. Sloboda explains that even though these categories of objects seem rather removed from one another, they were closely related in the eighteenth century due to their focus on “foreign and previously exoticized objects rendered into commodities through…overseas trade.” See also Kim Sloan, “Aimed at Universality and Belonging to the Nation: ‘The Enlightenment and the British Museum,” In Burnett, Andrew and Kim Sloan, eds. Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century
Portland’s ability to collect on such prolific levels is largely attributed to her wealth and status in society. Her family had long held great interest in science, art, and collecting, and her dowry and eventual inheritance helped spur and support her interest in these activities as well. Horace Walpole grouped her amongst the top six wealthiest collectors in England, and modern scholars continue to recognize her importance in the history of collecting.69 According to historian W.S. Lewis, “Few men have equaled…[the] Duchess of Portland, in mania of collecting, and perhaps no woman. In an age of great collectors, she rivaled the greatest.”70 At her death, the duchess’s collection was publicly auctioned. The preface to the auction catalogue impresses upon us further the vastness of her collection and her devotion to “Natural Knowledge and the Polite Arts, as well as her successful Endeavours to encrease [sic] the Stores of them...”71 The catalogue author assures potential purchasers that every item for sale came from the collection of the duchess and nothing was “foisted into it from the Cabinets of

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69 Sloboda, 457.
70 Quoted in Sloboda, 457.
71 Skinner, iii.
others,” the large numbers of which demonstrate the “infinite Pleasure and Delight” Portland took in gathering together the items in her collection. Her collection of shells in particular was so remarkable that Linnaeus had only categorized or described about one fourth of the specimens in the vast collection. The duchess’s main wish in collecting was to have “every unknown Species described and published to the World” in order to leave a complete record of her legacy. Friends, artists, scientists, and philosophers, often visited the duchess’s collection and made almost universally positive comments about the vast accumulation of science, art, and curiosities despite the collection’s disorganization and the controversial presence of porcelain.

In 1786, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* published an account of some of the more notable items auctioned from the duchess’s collection with the note that her collection was able to boast “of great richness and variety” and “sold uncommonly well,” especially considering how much the objects were originally purchased for. The article also notes that “the jewels brought high prices, but perhaps the antiquary may be disposed to think that the curiosities did not bear so good a price as they ought to have done.” Before the outset of the thirty-seven-day auction, the auction house published a catalogue of the items available for potential buyers. The whole collection sold for a little over £11,000. The published catalogue is about 200 pages long, further demonstrating the vast amount of natural curiosities, art, snuff boxes,

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72 Idem.  
73 Idem.  
74 Sloboda, 460, 463-64. Portland’s friends Mary Delany and Horace Walpole make multiple positive remarks about the duchess’s collection in correspondence. Other members of Portland’s social circles criticized collections like the duchess’s for containing too many foreign luxuries and labeled them extravagant and effeminate in taste.  
76 Idem.
jewels, and porcelain that the duchess inherited and collected throughout her lifetime. The shells alone in her collection number in the thousands. There were over 4,100 lots sold off during the auction, with tens of thousands of individual items sold.77

Anne Marie du Bocage, A Visitor from France

Anne Marie du Bocage was another woman who did not fit in the typical eighteenth-century mold; however, she was not an avid collector. As a poet and playwright, she received the honor of an invitation to join the Academy of Rouen and the Academy of Lyon in her later life. Before this unprecedented honor, she travelled to England, the United Provinces of the Netherlands, and Italy, writing letters to her sister throughout her journey. She describes the sites she saw and the people and manners she encountered in her years of travel. Her letters were translated into English and published in London in 1770. The publisher comments: “Her stile is lively and animated, her manner of viewing objects new and interesting, her reflections solid, her descriptions picturesque. But her attention is more engaged with the painting of manners and customs, than with the description of towns and palaces.”78 Du Bocage was more of a social observer than a frenetic describer of objects—she only touched on items that seemed particularly significant and worthy of attention. Her notice of objects also encompassed novel or especially intriguing objects, and her descriptions were generally just sketches absent of fine details.

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77 A Catalogue of the Portland Museum, Lately the Property of the Duchess Dowager of Portland, Deceased (1786). The categories listed in the catalog are as follows: shells, corals, petrifications, etc.; ores, minerals, etc.; exotic insects and English insects; fine old china; rare old gold and silver Japan, etc.; curious crystals; very curious snuff boxes; curious shells; birds eggs, British birds nests with their eggs; artificial curiosities, from America, China, and the newly discovered islands in the South Seas; dried plants, seeds, fungi, etc.; cabinets, etc.; various curiosities; gum and amber inclosing Insects; medals and coins; curious seals; prints and various drawings; miniatures; missals.

78 Publisher’s preface, Anne Marie du Bocage, Letters Concerning England, Holland, and Italy, Volume 1 (London, 1770), v, vi.
As the publisher noted, du Bocage does not go into lengthy detail about her outings in London, but she does attempt to lay to rest some perceived stereotypes about the English. She insists that the English have earned a bad reputation for being unkind to foreign visitors, but she claims that her experience has not been bad at all, citing thoughtful gifts of “a new and elegant edition of Milton,” “two little vessels of Agate,” fruit and “many marks of affection” as a hand of “sincere...friendship” to her.\textsuperscript{79} She does postulate that this spirit of friendship and generosity might have been extended to her and her travelling companions because they “but little resemble the natives of [their] country who dislike every opinion that is not familiar to them,” indicating an openness of mind that is most welcome in a traveler.\textsuperscript{80} Madame du Bocage further explains her idea of a good traveling experience by noting that her curiosity is satisfied in seeing the different manners and customs of foreign nations, and that this should be the very reason for visiting foreign places—to see and experience the diverse manners found in other lands. She also takes positive note of the “prevalent...spirit of patriotism” in England as opposed to her homeland, and it in fact “excite[s] [her] wonder” to see.\textsuperscript{81} Du Bocage feels the works that learned and wealthy individuals had undertaken on behalf of the nation—projects of urban improvement, scientific research, and the bequeathing of knowledge to the state and state institutions like the Royal Society—encapsulate the “spirit of patriotism” that she finds so appealing.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{79} Du Bocage, 32.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Idem.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 33. She speaks specifically of Thomas Gresham building the Royal Exchange and establishing Gresham College and five hospitals; William Harvey’s discovery of the circulation of blood; the improvement of the water supply in London by Sir Hugh Middleton; Sir John Cotton leaving his library to the state; and the duke of Norfolk leaving his library to the Royal Society.
She writes to her sister of another great collection the state purchased only a few years after her visit—the collection of Sir Hans Sloane. According to Madame du Bocage’s notes, Sloane may not have originally intended to leave his collection to the state. Rather, she states: “This curious old Gentleman intends, as it is said, to bequeath these fruits of his inquiries to the Royal Society of London, which is already rich in things of this nature.”83 She briefly describes a few of the items she encountered in his Cabinet “which is famous all over Europe for its curiosities” and is made up of fourteen rooms “filled with books and rareties.”84 The only item that she specifically mentions out of the thousands that she saw in Sloane’s collection is the skull of a whale, housed in the garden, which she compares in size to “a table that holds twelve dishes”—imparting a decidedly feminine flavor to her observation.85 Madame du Bocage also briefly makes note of her visit to the home of Dr. Richard Mead, a physician and collector of art, books, and manuscripts.

_Sophie von La Roche_

German novelist Sophie von La Roche visited England in 1786 and kept a lengthy diary during her stay. She and her traveling companions spent time in the countryside and smaller towns, but also saw the sights of London and engaged in many of the social, intellectual, and cultural activities offered. The observations she recorded after visiting the Tower of London, the British Museum, and the Leverian are striking in her depth of connection with many of the objects—the enthusiasm and emotion in her descriptions are unmistakable. The enormous collections of the British Museum and the structure they reside in impress La Roche

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83 Ibid., 36.
84 Du Bocage, 35.
85 Ibid., 36.
immediately, while the presence of many of her fellow countrymen, there to visit and study, comforted her. She mentions that the vast number of people at the museum when she visited made it difficult for her to see everything in as much detail as she would have liked. Despite the crowds, the Magna Carta and the liberties that it represented for the English people (but that she would “never share in”) moved her almost to tears. The portraits of past British rulers evoked just as strong a response in La Roche: “the lovely, reckless, luckless Mary of Scotland”; “Elizabeth the vindictive, in many ways so great”; Oliver Cromwell, whose portrait was “objectionable” since she viewed him as “an evil man of prayer.”

La Roche then moved beyond the collections of books and portraits to examine the Greek and Roman antiquities that Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803) had brought to England. An ancient Roman mirror especially captured her attention. She picked it up to view her own reflection, and imagined the previous owner as a young girl who might have used the mirror to admire a new necklace or pair of earrings. La Roche was even more strongly overcome by emotion when she inspected a funerary urn containing the ashes of a long-dead woman. She picked up the ashes and let them run through her fingers “tenderly, just as her best friend might once have grasped her hand,” then returned the ashes to the urn and murmured, “Forgive Hamilton and me for breaking in on your peace.” La Roche’s interest in the collection at the British Museum and the people that she imagined from the past was so strong that she was unable to finish viewing the rest of the curiosities that day.

86 Sophie von La Roche, Sophie in London, 1786: being the Diary of Sophie v. La Roche, trans. Clare Williams (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), 103.
87 La Roche, 104.
88 Presumably, at this time, there was no explicit rule against handling the objects in the museum. If there was, visitors seemed to ignore it.
89 La Roche, 107-08.
La Roche continued her tour of the curiosities of London in a visit to the Levarian Museum. Unlike the British Museum, which was free of charge (and astonishingly so to La Roche), visitors to the Levarian had to pay a small fee. Her exuberance for Sir Ashton Lever’s museum overflowed in her descriptions of the colorful native costumes and abundant exotic artifacts from the South Pacific. La Roche also praised Ashton’s carefully labeled collection, but finds the incredible numbers of items on display so astounding that the “mind and eye are quite dazzled...and in the end both are overwhelmed and retain nothing at all.” Despite the Levarian’s overwhelming assortment of items, La Roche extolled the collection as a “temple of nature, where every possible mark of her miracles and good works is preserved.”

Foreign Visitors

Madame du Bocage and Sophie von La Roche were just two of many foreign visitors to England in the eighteenth century interested in viewing the collections of scholars, natural philosophers, and connoisseurs. Several fellow foreigners kept travel logs of their experiences in England. In fact, La Roche recounted a brief meeting with Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, noting her familiarity with the records of his travels.

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90 La Roche, 114-15.
Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach hailed from Germany. He and his younger brother journeyed to England in 1710 where they spent the bulk of their time in London and Oxford. Uffenbach was a scholar, book-collector, and traveler whose detailed descriptions of his journeys and impressions of the places he visited and the people he encountered paint a colorful picture. As the editors of his travel accounts note: “The impression of the England of 1710 which emerges from Uffenbach’s descriptions is not an entirely flattering one.” It is, in fact, a rather different description than is found in Madame du Bocage’s and Sophie von La Roche’s brief descriptions.\(^9\) One of the first collections that Uffenbach describes in his visit to England is the Repository of the Royal Society on July 5, 1710. He and others on the Continent received reports of many great things about the Royal Society and its collection of natural history and experiments, but the meticulous German scholar finds the reality of the Repository of 1710 to be underwhelming. He is shocked by “how wretchedly it is all now ordered. But it is the sight of the Museum that is most astounding...where lie the finest instruments and other

articles...not only in no sort of order or tidiness but covered with dust, filth and coal-smoke, and many of them broken and utterly ruined.” Overall Uffenbach is very negative about the state of the repository and the Royal Society in general, asserting that this happens with “all public societies. For a short time they flourish, while the founder and original members are there to set the standard; then come all kinds of setbacks...from envy...[and] lack of unanimity,” because there were often no regulations for members of the societies, and because the members were not disciplined enough to meet consistently and produce new papers and experiments. He does allow that Sir Hans Sloane (the secretary at for the society at the time) “is certainly an honest fellow of great parts,” but that Sloane is so preoccupied with his medical practice and his own impressive collection that he cannot devote enough time or energy to help restore the reputation of the Royal Society and its museum.

Despite his overall negative view of the Royal Society and its collection, Uffenbach found some items in the Repository interesting enough for him to comment on positively. He even declared himself delighted at the ingenious way in which various animal and anatomical specimens were preserved in spirits so they floated in the liquid, suspended from glass balls. This method of display allowed for easy viewing and kept the specimens from drying out even if some of the liquid evaporated. This kind of innovation is what Uffenbach wished to see more of from the Royal Society of London and the various scholarly societies throughout Europe as opposed to further chaos and ruined specimens like the preserved “venae arteriae and nerves

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93 Idem. Uffenbach’s negative view of the Royal Society’s Repository even extends to the room in which the Society has their meetings, citing it as “very small and wretched and the best things there are the portraits of its members, of which the most noteworthy are those of Boyle and Hoock.” (102)
94 Uffenbach, London, 100.
of the human body” that were well arranged, but hung on four exposed boards on a wall, susceptible to and “ruined by dust and smoke, so that they look utterly black and wretched, which is indeed a pity.”

Uffenbach journeyed from London to Oxford in August of 1710, where he spent several months attempting to see the collections, libraries, and gardens of the university. Even as Uffenbach dispenses praise of Oxford, he also slights the institution: “In the afternoon of 17 August, we wandered about to see the town generally, and found it rather better than Cambridge, though were it not for the more important colleges, the place would be not unlike a large village.” He likewise comments notices that though the Physic Garden is well laid out and he has never seen yew trees “finer or better-trained”, it is “ill-kept...and overgrown.”

The next day, August 18, 1710, began Uffenbach’s encounters with the assorted librarians and staff members of the libraries, manuscript collections, and museums that he visited. These encounters also bring to light his many frustrations in attempting actually to observe the collections he travelled so far to inspect. Uffenbach seemed displeased that he and his brother had to ask the librarian at the “world-famed” Bodleian Library for a pass, and pay an additional eight shillings to see “something more profound” than what the assistant librarians decided to show for a small fee, which Uffenbach suspected was “all sorts of rubbish...” This extra fee also gained him the privilege of handling the books. He notes that most of the populace were content to view in a “casual inspection” what they could without going through
the hassle of obtaining a pass and describes with derision the company in which they found themselves to view the collection: “Every moment brings fresh spectators of this description and, surprisingly enough, amongst them peasants and women-folk, who gaze at the library as a cow might gaze at the new gate with such a noise and trampling of feet that others are much disturbed.”\textsuperscript{99} Uffenbach’s acerbic words perfectly depict a man who is a serious scholar and does not wish to be bothered by the rabble when he is in his element—a library celebrated the world over for its rare documents and manuscripts. He is a visitor who wishes to see and discover a collection on his own without outside disturbances, the only exception to his solitary state might be an expert guide who could point out intricacies and details to a manuscript or object about which Uffenbach himself did not know. He wishes to view collections with an equal or a superior in knowledge and expertise in subject matter.

Shortly after their first visits to the Bodleian Library, Uffenbach and his brother visited the \textit{Theatrum Anatomicum}. Uffenbach notes that this is neither a proper museum nor a collection hall: “It is merely a great hall in which objects of interest, which partly do not belong here at all, are hanging around the walls, as, for example, works or art and so on. It could rather be called natural history museum or art gallery,” but a collection is nevertheless located here, even though the majority of the collected items have nothing to do with the human anatomy, which one might expect from an anatomy theater.\textsuperscript{100} There are some anatomical oddities housed here, such as the jaw of a woman with an odd growth, a plaster of Paris cast of a deformed human foot, the skeleton of a pigmy, a grotesquely large human bladder, several

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 3.  
\textsuperscript{100} Uffenbach, \textit{Oxford}, 19.
paintings of the human muscular system, and “the skeleton and stuffed skin of a woman who had had eighteen husbands and was hanged because she had murdered four of them.”101 In addition to these few human specimens, there are many more seemingly random curiosities: boots that supposedly belonged to Augustus, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony; a shoe with a missing heel purportedly owned by Queen Elizabeth; two worm-eaten loaves of bread from the siege of Oxford during the English Civil War; a lock that “jealous husbands in Italy put on their wives”; several idols from foreign lands; a “terrifically big Indian bat”; “a monstrosity of a lamb with two bodies, eight feet, four ears but only one head”; the Mappa Geographica of China drawn by Dr. Edward Bernard; and Joseph’s coat of many colors.102 Again, Uffenbach was critical of the disorganization of the collection and the poor state that many of the objects are in. He was appalled to find “all sorts of things in boxes and wrapped in paper and also some medals, which are not at all suitable for this place” were merely “thrown together” in a drawer without any clue as to their origin or value.103

At the end of his time at the anatomy theater collection, Uffenbach notes again that, in general, the specimens housed in this collection existed in turmoil and filth. The items are displayed in no order and the majority of them were not objects of an anatomical nature at all. Rather, Uffenbach believed most of the items would make more sense in an art gallery. Additionally, despite the fact that the building housing this collection was originally intended to

101 Ibid., 20, 22.
102 Uffenbach, Oxford, 20-25. Uffenbach was doubtful that the coat was indeed Joseph’s from Genesis, which shows his willingness to question the origins of objects on display and not just take them at face value. Uffenbach had an education and experience in the world, whereas the people who “gaze at the library as a cow might gaze at the new gate,” might not have the knowledge to discern fact from hyperbole and take these wondrous objects and curiosities at face value.
103 Ibid., 21.
perform dissections in, the school officials elected to perform dissections in other labs and classrooms so that the collection might not be disturbed or stolen. As a man who travelled and had a good education, Uffenbach had standards about how collections should be shown. They are physical manifestations of concentrated knowledge and in to learn properly (and not just experience awe), one must encounter logically arranged collections in a calm environment.

Several days after his private tour through the Theatrum Anatomicum, Uffenbach attempted to visit the Ashmolean Museum, but he was disappointed as it “was a market day and all sorts of country-folk, men and women, were up there” because the posted rules for visiting “allow everyone to go in. So, since we could have seen nothing well for the crowd, we went down-stairs again and saved it for another day.” When he was able to visit the Ashmolean two days later without a crowd of gawking commoners, Uffenbach was pleasantly surprised by the natural history specimens as they were “for England...in fair order.” His grudging praise is short-lived, however, for upon further inspection, he declares himself surprised “that there should be such talk made over this museum outside this island, and more particularly of course within it.” He did admit that the museum had a fine collection of butterflies, but its coin collection, which was in the same cabinet, though numerous, was bad. Further proof of the poor organization of the museum was the museum catalogue, which Uffenbach persuaded the caretakers to show him. The catalogue was a full six volumes in length, but the specimens were “only designated by one word,” insufficient to give a true sense

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104 Idem. The Ashmolean Museum was more of an art gallery at the time, and Uffenbach felt that many of the items at the anatomy theater would be more at home in the Ashmolean.
106 Ibid., 26.
of the objects on display. This catalogue was a poor substitute for actually visiting the museum as detailed descriptions were sorely missing.

One of Uffenbach’s greatest complaints throughout his journeys in England was the difficulty he encountered while accessing the assorted libraries, museums, collections, and laboratories on his itinerary. Even more frustrating was the hasty pace his docents set while viewing the objects he so desired to scrutinize. In the Royal Society’s Repository, he asked for permission to view the library at his leisure, but his guide rushed through the collection of manuscripts, just as his next guide hurried through the society’s collection of natural history and science. Uffenbach found “good manuscripts” in the library that he wished to study, but he “could scare glance at them—in such haste was the operator in his English fashion, thinking indeed that he had already spent too much time with us in the Museum.”

In Oxford, Uffenbach wished to have access to some of the more rare items in the Bodleian Library. The library curator told Uffenbach that he would have to take an oath in order to gain more extensive access. He appeared at the appointed time to swear the oath, but felt disappointed by the absence of the Procurator Academiae who was supposed to have administered the oath for him. Uffenbach attributes this to a “general lack of courtesy” that Englishmen show when it comes to matters of punctuality and keeping of appointments. He accused one of the Ashmolean Museum curators of neglect, as the man was often nowhere to be found when Uffenbach required assistance in locating a manuscript. Uffenbach speculated that the museum director spent more time frequenting inns and alehouses than tending to his

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108 Ibid., 28, 30-31.
job at the museum. He also suggests that were the curator more often in the museum, the objects on display would be better arranged and preserved to allow for a better viewing experience. He does graciously admit that the specimens in the Ashmolean Museum are “better kept than those in Gresham College, London, which are far too bad considering their splendid description.”

Uffenbach’s disapproval of fellow visitors is again evident in his final visit to the Ashmolean Museum when he notes that general visitors shows no comportment when visiting the museum—they freely handle the objects on display, “impetuously...in the usual English fashion,” which greatly contributes to their state of decay and disarray. He feels that the women allowed in to view the collection are the greatest offenders of this breach in propriety: “as I mentioned before, even the women are allowed up here for sixpence; they run here and there grabbing at everything and taking no rebuff from the Sub-Custos.”

Uffenbach experienced a positive turn of events when he returned to London and visited Sir Hans Sloane and his private collection. He and his brother visited Sloane’s residence and collection on November 3, 1710. Uffenbach remarked that Sloane received the brothers “with vast politeness. [Sloane] immediately addressed us in French, which was most amazing for an Englishman; for they would rather appear dumb than converse with a foreigner in any other language than their own, even if they should be quite capable of doing so.” Uffenbach gives a brief description of the layout of the main rooms they are shown and praises Sloane’s

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large collection for having “for the most part extraordinarily curious and valuable things.”\textsuperscript{113} Uffenbach appears impressed by the “great quantity of all manner of animals,” some of which were preserved in spirits and some by being dried, “a prodigious variety of strange fish...an especially remarkable collection of lapidibus pretiosis [rare gems and stones], among them being several of uncommon size and value....a handsome collection of all kinds of insects...a cabinet of shells, which, though not at all numerous, consisted entirely of choice specimens.”\textsuperscript{114} He is noticeably appreciative of the quality and organization of Sloane’s collection (especially in comparison to the collection of the Royal Society), and he seems impressed with his host’s character, demeanor, and discernment in choosing specimens for his collection. Uffenbach does not mention how much time that he and his brother spent in the company of Sir Hans Sloane, but he seems satisfied with their trip, as he does not mention being hurried through the large collection.

\textit{Various Foreign Visitors}

French geologist and traveler, Barthélemy Faujas de Saint-Fond (1741-1819) visited England and Scotland and published an account of his travels in 1797 (the work appeared in English in 1799). He indicates that his focuses in his journey and his writing were primarily natural history, the sciences, and the arts. During his travels, he stayed with and visited many men of learning and science; in fact, the first such person he visited was Sir Joseph Banks, the famous traveller and scientist. Impressed by the polite welcome he received from his host and his host’s companions, Faujas de Saint-Fond entertained himself by perusing Banks’ “numerous

\textsuperscript{113} Uffenbach, \textit{London}, 185.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 186.
library...that consists entirely of books on natural history” and praised it as “the completest of its kind in existence.” Faujas de Saint-Fond visited the British Museum during his stay in London, but he chose not to make that experience the centerpiece of his writing because he felt that other writers had already done justice to the large attractions of London and he wished to focus his writings on the natural history and smaller collections that he encountered in his journeys.

One such collection that he enjoyed examining in London was that of John Whitehurst (1713-1788). Their mutual friend, Benjamin Franklin, provided Faujas de Saint-Fond with a letter of introduction. Whitehurst was a pioneer in the field of geology and had a small collection of mineralogical specimens that Faujas de Saint-Fond enjoyed discussing with him. According to Faujas de Saint-Fond, Whitehurst kept his collection small because he chose to focus on a particular location to gather samples—he was most interested in the geology of Derbyshire—and Faujas de Saint-Fond found the collection an “interesting spectacle” in it’s specificity, which was a direct contrast to the collecting practice of Sloane.

Faujas de Saint-Fond did not limit his visits to collections of only natural history; he also enjoyed visiting collections of scientific apparatuses. One such collector was Tiberius Cavallo, an Italian physicist and natural philosopher who also created and improved scientific instruments. After viewing Tiberius Cavallo’s collection of thermometers, Faujas de Saint-Fond praises the artists and instrument makers of England, upon whom many scientists throughout

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116 Ibid., 1-2.
117 Faujas de Saint-Fond, 22.
the world rely, noting that the instruments in England have a “high degree of accuracy and perfection” and the education that the English scientists and artists receive is an honor to their country as the field of science grows and others look to England as an example.118

As his visit in London continued, Faujas de Saint-Fond met Dr. John Letsom (1744-1815), another friend of Benjamin Franklin’s, and a well-known physician, naturalist, philanthropist, and collector (in a similar vein as Sir Hans Sloane). Letsom, a Quaker and abolitionist, founded the Medical Society of London in 1773 and published a guide on entomology for the traveling naturalist in 1774. Faujas de Saint-Fond notes that Letsom had a fine collection of birds, insects, and minerals, “some of which are very curious; but of all the objects that are to be seen and admired at his house, the most interesting is, without contradiction, himself.”119 It seems that even though Faujas de Saint-Fond was pleased to see Letsom’s collection, he was most taken with the man who brought all of these objects together. Implying that beyond the collection itself, the collector is the greatest curiosity of all, due to his devotion to and passion for wondrous objects of natural and man-made origin—when visitors go to see a collection, they are viewing the life work of one man (or several in the case of a larger institute), so that the man is on display and under just as much scrutiny as the objects themselves.

Another scientist who might have been even more curious than his collection was John Sheldon. He had a well-appointed anatomical cabinet, which Faujas de Saint-Fond named “one of the finest...in existence,” and Faujas de Saint-Fond visited him often.120 Faujas de Saint-Fond was happy to spend several days in the company of Sheldon and his cabinet, learning about

118 Ibid., 25.
119 Faujas de Saint-Fond, 35.
120 Ibid., 40.
different anatomical preservations and displays, but the item Sheldon possessed which interested Faujas de Saint-Fond the most was a “kind of mummy.”\textsuperscript{121} Sheldon kept his female mummy in a glass-topped coffin-like table that he was able to open. She was preserved in such a way that Sheldon was able to move all of her limbs smoothly and naturally. He preserved the girl by injecting her with spirits of wine, camphor, and turpentine and then rubbing all of her skin and intestines down with alum, camphor, and rosin. He even went so far as to inject a colored substance into her veins to make her appear more life-like. The box in which she was placed was lined with chalk to help absorb humidity.

After explaining all of the details of the mummy’s preservation, Sheldon informed Faujas de Saint-Fond that the woman had been his mistress whom he had loved deeply and had nursed through a long sickness, to which she eventually succumbed. During her illness, Sheldon’s mistress requested that he mummify her so that he could always “keep her beside [him].”\textsuperscript{122} Faujas de Saint-Fond was rather unsettled at learning that the woman had been someone whom Sheldon loved, but some of his unease was mitigated as he later learned that Sheldon did not undertake his mistress’s request easily or with a light heart—it took much strength for Sheldon to honor her request.\textsuperscript{123} After that encounter, most of Faujas de Saint-Fond’s visits were, on the whole, much more ordinary and decidedly less macabre.

Faujas de Saint-Fond entitled one section of his book, “Some Cabinets of Natural History,” comprised of brief accounts of the various natural history cabinets that he visited while in London. The first that he mentions is the cabinet of Dru Drury, which was made

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{122} Faujas de Saint-Fond, 42-46.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 46-47.
primarily of insects from around the globe. Drury took the time to show Faujas de Saint-Fond “his collection in its minutest [sic] detail and with much affability.”\textsuperscript{124} He then visited the cabinet of Thomas Sheldon, the brother of the previously discussed John Sheldon. Instead of the anatomical specimens (and the mummy) contained in his brother’s collection, Thomas Sheldon’s cabinet housed shells from the South Sea and other diverse marine specimens.\textsuperscript{125} Faujas de Saint-Fond concludes this section of his book by expressing his regret at not being able to see three other privately owned collections as their owners were out of town. From these smaller, personal collections, Faujas de Saint-Fond then turned his attention to a collection on a much larger scale.

When Barthélemy Faujas de Saint-Fond visited the British Museum, it still occupied the residence of the late duke of Montague, but it was rapidly outgrowing its space. Since its original formation by Sir Hans Sloane, the collection multiplied and underwent several renovations. The lack of staffing or cohesive vision for the future left the museum in a state of disrepair and disorganization. Faujas de Saint-Fond deplores the fact that the “collection was not allowed to remain as [Sir Hans Sloane] originally left it,” and believed that had the museum been left in its original state with the “modest title of Sloane’s Museum,” more people would “have been anxious to visit the collection of that indefatigable naturalist.”\textsuperscript{126} Faujas de Saint-Fond felt that anyone who viewed the more modest collection would have been more satisfied

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 123.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{126} Faujas de Saint-Fond, 86.
than a visitor to the present British Museum because Sloane’s collection, while made possible by his wealth, was also a testament to his “love of science” and his “liberal disposition.”

Faujas de Saint-Fond is adamant in his dislike for the changes perpetrated upon the original collection of Sloane: “But I am not pleased that the collection of a private individual, to which there has been since superadded a crowd of heterogeneous objects, calculated rather to distract, than to command the attention, should possess the title of The British Museum.”

He feels that a nation so great in other regards—commerce, the navy, science—ought to have “monuments worthy of herself.” Faujas de Saint-Fond’s many positive experiences at private collections compound his disappointment with the state of the most lauded collection in the nation.

Unlike the complaints of Uffenbach, Faujas de Saint-Fond’s concerns were neither about the people visiting the museum, nor about the difficulty in seeing the collections. They are, however, similar to Uffenbach’s sentiments about the state of the objects themselves and the

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128 Ibid., 85-86.
129 Ibid., 86.
general chaos within the collection. Faujas de Saint-Fond indicates that, though the collection is valuable, only one portion of newly classified fish is in any kind of order. The scale of the disorganization is such that the whole collection “appears rather an immense magazine, in which things have been thrown at random, than a scientific collection,” structured and organized for the purpose of educating the populace and bringing honor to the nation.131 Faujas de Saint-Fond is so affected by the condition of the museum that he calls it “disgusting” and provides an elegant diatribe describing exactly how the museum will never be used; how it does a disservice to men of science, medicine, art, and philosophy; and how the young, inquisitive minds of the nation “so fond of novelty, will here find no excitement to study....”132 In fact, Faujas de Saint-Fond finds the situation at the British Museum is so dire that he believes:

No artist will ever be excited to go there, to acquire those branches of information which relate to the materials he uses, and the sources whence they are derived. Never will the painter repair thither to see and to study animals according to nature, and to admire the different modes of colouring, and the infinite variety of shades presented by the plumage of birds, the gay attire of butterflies and the oriental splendor of shells. Never will the physician, who devotes his studies to the curing...go to learn from that chaos....Neither will the philosopher, who loves to behold nature on a great scale...find anything to interest them in the midst of such disorder. In a word, youth, so inquisitive, and so fond of novelty, will here find no excitement to study, from the attractive lure, which captivates by the elegance and correctness of arrangement, and which is so well calculated to create or unfold a taste for the history of nature.133 Faujas de Saint-Fond, like Uffenbach, sees the necessity in having a well-ordered space for the acquisition of knowledge, so that the mind and sensibilities are not distracted by specimens in

130 Faujas de Saint-Fond, 89.
131 Idem.
132 Idem.
133 Faujas de Saint-Fond, 89-91.
poor disrepair or by a space that does not facilitate the logical expression and formulation of new ideas and knowledge.

Faujas de Saint-Fond points out that some criticize the English for not “giving sufficient encouragement to the sciences, and especially with not investing them with the consideration which they merit,” but he does not fully share this criticism.\textsuperscript{134} Earlier during his stay in London he had expressed his admiration for the instrument makers and artists in the scientific world and had praised various individuals in their scientific pursuits. But he later most assuredly had issues with how science was displayed on a national level in England. He sincerely hoped that one day a more pleasing arrangement could be found for the British Museum so that it could live up to its potential and its name. He asserts that, once the British Museum began to be worthy of its name and the activities of the English nation, it would begin to “contribute to the enlargement of human knowledge, and thereby to the happiness of the whole human race.”\textsuperscript{135}

Other foreign visitors to the British Museum were generally more complimentary than Faujas de Saint-Fond. Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz calls the museum a “monument of the progress of the arts and sciences.” He did not see the purpose of the museum as one of perfecting the realms of art and science, but as a central location from which to display all of the wonders of modern advancement.\textsuperscript{136} Unlike Faujas de Saint-Fond, Archenholz sees the growth of the collection as a positive endeavor for the state and a testament to the wealth of the nation and the “greatness of the people.”\textsuperscript{137} Archenholz does suggest that the collection of

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 87.
  \item \textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 90-91.
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Idem.
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books and manuscripts held at the British Museum should be increased. He also visited the famed coin collection of the physician William Hunter (1718-1783), naming it the “greatest collection of coins and medals, perhaps in the whole world,” and that the English nation is forever indebted to Hunter for the “superb cabinet” that he diligently collected over fifty years of his life. Again, Archenholz is glad that new coins have been added to the collection, and sees these additions as enhancements rather than detractions from the collection’s original perfection.\[138\]

Local Visitors

Intended not solely for the pleasure and edification of foreign visitors, the British Museum and various private collections also attracted the praise and censure of local visitors (from London and the British countryside) as well. Visitors from foreign lands were not the only ones to document their travels—local visitors likewise kept records of their visits to various curious attractions and collections in their diaries and correspondence. In his Life of Johnson (1791), James Boswell wrote about a visit they made together to the museum of Mr. Richard Greene. Greene claimed distant kinship to Johnson and was pleased that the famous writer came to visit him. Boswell remarked positively on the collection as a whole, noting that it was “truly a wonderful collection, both of antiquities and natural curiosities, and ingenious works of art.” He was pleased at the organization and clear labeling of the collection and remarked that Greene planned to publish a guide to the collection soon.\[139\]

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\[138\] Ibid., 19.
Additionally, British subjects were expected to be familiar with the rules for visiting their nation’s treasure, The British Museum. The museum trustees published a handbook that included times the museum was open, instructions for procuring tickets, and rules for visiting the museum. The trustees decreed that the British Museum should be free of charge and open year-round Monday through Friday. Between the months of September and April the museum remained open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. From May through August the museum stayed open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday and Friday. The British Museum closed its doors Christmas day and one week after, Easter and one week after, Whitsunday and one week after, and all other days “specially appointed for thanksgivings or fasts by publick authority.”

John Evelyn

One early collector (primarily of books) and visitor of collections, John Evelyn (1620-1706), kept an extensive series of diaries throughout his life, which included descriptions of the times that he visited the curiosity cabinets of friends and royal personages. One of his earliest

140 Statutes and Rules, 7-8.
documented visits to a collection in England occurred in July 1654 in Oxford. He and his wife were given a tour of the “rareties” housed at the Bodleian Library. The many-colored coat that supposedly belonged to Joseph—also viewed by Uffenbach—already resided in Oxford at this time, sixty years before Uffenbach’s visit. Evelyn also briefly documents a tour through the Anatomie Scholae, which Uffenbach likewise perused during his time in Oxford. Like Uffenbach, Evelyn saw nothing of great note at this theatre for learning, but he made no comments on the state of organization as Uffenbach did—perhaps the collection had not yet fallen into the dire straits of disrepair that Uffenbach witnessed.\textsuperscript{141} A few years later, Evelyn briefly notes a visit to John Tradescant’s Museum, which later became the Ashmolean that Uffenbach visited. In his eyes, the most notable items were ancient instruments of war from Rome, India, and other lands.\textsuperscript{142} In October 1662, Evelyn received an invitation to the College of Physicians and viewed the library and collection with Dr. Christopher Meret, the keeper of the library. Evelyn made particular mention of two of the “divers natural Curiosities”—the “Devil Fish” and the thigh bone of an ostrich, which he “much admired,” which indicates the high regard and novelty that the exotic still had in society.\textsuperscript{143} In 1678, Evelyn visited the collection of Elias Ashmole at Lambeth. Evelyn did not seem much impressed with Ashmole’s large collection of astrological manuscripts, but he did mention a toad preserved in amber.\textsuperscript{144}

In December 1686, Evelyn took the countess of Sunderland to see William Courten’s (1642-1702) collection of curiosities, which impressed Evelyn exceedingly. He commented on the size of the collection, but also noted that there were many fine and rare specimens

\textsuperscript{141} Evelyn, 339.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 381.
\textsuperscript{143} Evelyn, 445.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 650.
(particularly of minerals and gems) in Courten’s collection that he had never seen in any of his travels abroad.\textsuperscript{145} Evelyn observed that even though Courten had gathered together a large collection that was estimated to be worth £8,000, he still “seem’d a Modest and obliging person.”\textsuperscript{146} Evelyn visited Courten’s collection again in 1690 and this time commented particularly on “his full and rare collection of Medails: which taken all together in all kinds is doubtlesse one of the most perfect assembllys of rareties that can be any where seen.”\textsuperscript{147} Twice more Evelyn documents visits to Courten’s collection of rareties—his is the only collection that Evelyn mentions visiting so many times—in 1692 and 1695.\textsuperscript{148} Evelyn’s continual visits to William Courten’s collection could indicate that Evelyn went to admire newly acquired objects at each visit, but the diarist makes no specific mention of this.

Evelyn also writes of his visit to Sloane’s renowned collection in 1691. He introduces the collection as a “universal Collection of the natural production of Jamaica consisting of Plants, [fruits,] Corrals, Minerals, [stones,] Earth, shells, animals, Insects etc”.\textsuperscript{149} Due to Evelyn’s great interest in gardening, he seemed most taken with Sloane’s folios of dried plant-life from Jamaica, and encouraged Sloane to write a “History of that Iland,” which Sloane did eventually write and publish.\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 856-57.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 857.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 922.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 948, 1001.
\textsuperscript{149} Evelyn, 936.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 937.
William Hutton

William Hutton, a man who moved in less illustrious social circles than those of Evelyn, a paper merchant and amateur historian from Birmingham, traveled to London in 1784 due to a subpoena to testify in court. He left on short notice and decided to describe his journey as he had not traveled often to London: “What a man sees every day, he sees without attention; but when he first beholds those objects, he feels what he sees. Habit destroys wonder.”151 One of his chief purposes in writing this account was to convey the wonder that he experienced in his unfamiliar surroundings. Unlike other merchants and men of his acquaintance, Hutton had only seen London once before his ten-day stay in 1784, so that “every thing was new and surprising” even though he was only able to “survey but a small part of what was worthy of remark.”152 He was, however, determined to do more than attend court and decided not to “depart till [he had] examined some little of [London’s] boundaries, its edifices, its curiosities, its manners, its antiquities, and its follies.”153

Hutton’s visit to the British Museum did not meet his expectations. His experience with the storehouse of knowledge was anything but positive. Hutton’s short stay in London did not allow him to procure an entrance ticket in the manner mandated by the rules for visiting the museum, which required the hopeful attendee to write to the British Museum, indicating a desire to visit, providing his name, address, and a list of possible times the person might like to come. A museum official then checked the visitor appointment book, waiting list, and available times to visit and sent back a message for the visitor to come to the museum to pick up a ticket.

151 William Hutton, Journey from Birmingham to London (1785; repr., Norwich: John Stacey, 1825), 4-6.
152 Ibid., 4.
153 Ibid., 13.
Even though there was no charge for admission, the whole process generally took about three
days from request to visit. Hutton did not know anybody in the city and so could not easily
find someone with an extra ticket to view the “first class of rareties.” He eventually found a
man who had a ticket for the next day and was able to persuade him to sell the ticket for about
two shillings. On December 7, he eagerly awaited entrance to the “vast cabinet” where “the
wonders of creation are deposited” that he had waited so long to see. Upon entering, he was
immediately disappointed that the guide seemed not to know anything of the curiosities on
display, could not answer any questions satisfactorily, and subsequently hurried their group
through the rooms at such a pace that they could not stop to study the items for themselves.
When asked to provide information about any of the objects, the tour conductor replied
incredulously that he could not be expected to know of everything housed in the museum. The
tour proceeded in “haste and…silence” except for a few whispers.

Hutton explains his great disappointment at the lack of information provided by the
docents charged to guide visitors through the curiosities of the museum, for “wonders which I
do not understand...are no wonders to me.” To truly comprehend and appreciate the wonders
on display, Hutton feels it is best to learn the history of an object as one encounters it for the
first time. In his disappointment in the British Museum, Hutton compares himself to Tantalus:

...in the midst of a rich entertainment consisting of ten thousand rareties;
but, like Tantalus, I could not taste one. It grieved me to think how much I
lost for want of little information. In about thirty minutes we finished our

154 Statutes and Rules, 9-12.
155 Hutton, 140. The museum trustees frowned upon this practice. They wanted visitors who could not
attend on the day their ticket prescribed to return their ticket to the museum porter. This did not
always happen, and even though the museum itself charged no admission fee, some people made profit
off of the curiosity of others by acquiring tickets and selling them.
156 Hutton, 141-43.
silent journey through this princely mansion, which would well have taken me thirty days. I went out much about as wise as I went in...I had laid more stress on the British Museum than on any thing I should see in London—it was the only thing that disgusted me.\textsuperscript{157}

It was not the objects in the Museum that disappointed Hutton; rather, the manner in which he was shown them—he was so appalled with the lack of knowledge and the comportment of the docent that he rates their “conductor at the Museum a little below a common prostitute, and rank him with a private centinel.”\textsuperscript{158}

Hutton described his visits to other collections, which were much more pleasing than his trip to the British Museum. He visited the curiosities of Don Saltero’s Coffee House and Curiosity Museum—a barber shop turned coffee shop in the seventeenth century that was unique in its display of curiosity cabinets—at Chelsea where he received a short guidebook that “[explained] every article in the collection” so that he could view the collection at his leisure and have all of the information he wanted at hand.\textsuperscript{159} James Salter, a former servant of Hans Sloane, opened his coffee shop about 1695 and he eventually displayed cast-offs and duplicates from Sloane’s private collection. Patrons viewed Salter’s museum for the price of a cup of coffee, which they could enjoy while viewing his miscellaneous curiosities. Salter regularly updated his catalogue as he acquired new objects—there were about 250 objects listed in the first catalogue. In 1799, Salter’s heirs sold the collection of about 700 objects at a public auction. The atmosphere at Salter’s collection contrasts markedly with that of the early British Museum. Hutton experienced a much more relaxed environment at Don Saltero’s Coffee

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 143-45.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 146.
\textsuperscript{159} Hutton, 146-47.
House than he did at the museum, and he satisfied his curiosity with this smaller, less ostentatious collection because of the less stringently controlled surroundings.

Hutton also visited the collection of Richard Greene (1716-1793) of Lichfield, an antiquarian and general collector of curiosities. Hutton thought that perhaps Greene had the “best cabinet in England, out of London,” and his host’s affability pleased him. Greene’s personal anecdotes and his expansive knowledge delighted Hutton.\textsuperscript{160} The Gentleman’s Magazine describes Greene in his 1793 obituary as “most deservedly lamented” and praised his museum as one that “merited and attracted the notice of the antiquary and curious of every denomination; to the collection of which he dedicated the principal part of his life, and which, free from expence, was open to the inspection of the curious.”\textsuperscript{161}

As Hutton observed, collectors did not merely purchase expensive objects for their own pleasure, but to have others see them as well; however, the British Government did not make a good display of the nation’s collection, which it had purchased at great expense from Sloane. Hutton was so disappointed in his experience at the British Museum that he vowed not to go back until he could have a knowledgeable friend go with him to tell him of the curiosities there, or until he could acquire a guidebook to instruct himself like he found Don Saltero’s. Despite the government’s purported efforts to present the British Museum as a “national honour and an indulgence to the curious,” Hutton found a more pleasurable experience in curiosity and knowledge in smaller collections owned by men of means.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{162} Hutton, 147-48.
The British Museum did not disappoint all visitors. A letter to the editor of \textit{The Gentleman’s Magazine} in February 1803 signed by “Philomath” indicated that recent improvements had been made to the British Museum in regards to admission to the reading room and the accommodations that the scholars might find there. The board of regents approved the expansion of the reading room, and readers and researchers had the luxury of a staff member assigned solely to assist them. There still seemed to be a rather circuitous method of acquiring tickets to visit the museum, such as Hutton encountered in his attempt to visit, but Philomath approved of these restrictions that kept the crowds at bay.\textsuperscript{163}

\textbf{Famous/Royal Visitors}

Royal visitors and visitors who were well-known members of society sometimes received a special note in a collector’s correspondence or a visitor’s-logbook. These influential visitors could help bring other visitors to a collection (or deter them) based on their feedback. In a 1667 letter, John Evelyn mentioned a visit from the duchess of Newcastle to the repository of the Royal Society. His dissatisfaction with her visit is evident in his description of the great pomp and circumstance that accompanied her, as well as in his characterization of her as “a mighty pretender to Learning, Poetrie and Philosophie.”\textsuperscript{164} It is interesting to note that Evelyn specifically mentioned the duchess. Most accounts neglect to note women by name.\textsuperscript{165}

The duchess of Portland had the honor of receiving the royal family—King George III, Queen Charlotte, two princes, and three princesses—to her home at Bulstrode in 1778. Her

\textsuperscript{163}John Nichols, ed. “Letter to the Editor,” \textit{The Gentleman’s Magazine: and historical chronicle}, February 1803, 99-100. Uffenbach would probably have approved of this measure to bring order to the collection as well, including the attempts to restrict the less scholarly visitors.

\textsuperscript{164}Evelyn, 509.

\textsuperscript{165}Similarly, see earlier note on Ulisse Aldrovandi and female visitors to his collection and in his visitor’s log. Findlen, \textit{Possessing Nature}, 140-41.
friend Mary Delany described the visit of the royals, noting their particular interest in Portland’s china, “and with wondering and enquiring eyes admired all her magnificent curiosities.” It was common knowledge for the time that the royal couple were both interested in collecting and in scientific and naturalistic pursuits, which implies a deeper interest in Portland’s vast collection than merely the novelty of it.

Sir Hans Sloane also received royal and noteworthy visitors to his collection. Arthur MacGregor recounts an anecdote concerning George Frederic Handel visiting Sloane’s collection in 1740, after which Sloane and Handel had tea together. It is said that during this tea, Handel set a muffin upon a rare manuscript, thereby staining it permanently with butter, causing Sloane great consternation. Sloane also had the pleasure of entertaining Frederick Louis, prince of Wales, and his wife, Augusta, the princess of Wales, in 1748. The Gentleman’s Magazine: and historical chronicle recounted the favor of the royal visit later that year. At the conclusion of their visit, the prince described Sloane as “antient and infirm,” so that he received the royal couple in his sitting room. He does not appear to have shown them around his collection personally, which was his usual practice in his younger years. According to the magazine’s account, the prince “expressed the great esteem and value he had for [Sloane] personally, and how much the learned world was obliged to him for his having collected such a vast library of curious books, and such immense treasures of the valuable and instructive

166 Sloboda, 465.
167 Ibid., 456.
productions of nature and art.”170 The bulk of the report describes the various items on display in Sloane’s home and the basic layout of the collection. Upon leaving, the prince and princess expressed their “pleasure, at seeing a collection, which surpass’d all the notions or ideas they had formed from even the most favourable accounts of it.” During the visit, the prince displayed his learning by speaking knowledgably about a variety of the objects in Sloane’s collection from antiquities to shells and delightedly “express’d the great pleasure” it gave him to see so magnificent a collection in England. The prince declared the collection an ornament to the nation, which he fully expected to be useful to the nation and a benefit to learning. He wished to have Sloane’s collection “established for publick use to the latest posterity.”171

Horace Walpole also hosted various members of royal families to his private collection at his Strawberry Hill home. In his book of visitors, he reports that in 1786 he gave personal tours to Princess Amélie on June 29 and the archduke and archduchess of Austria on October 1.172 On July 3, 1795, Walpole again personally showed his collections to Queen Charlotte, three unnamed princesses, and the duchess of York.173 Walpole may have received more visitors of renown than are listed in the visitor logs to Strawberry Hill, but the memos, stories, and notes of his guests are sporadic throughout the twelve years that he kept his book.174 Like the British Museum did, Walpole also printed pamphlets providing potential guests with rules for viewing his collection. He showed his home and collection free of charge, but requested

170 Ibid., 301.  
171 Ibid., 302.  
172 Walpole, 225, 227. Princess Amélie, or Amelia, was the second daughter of George II and Caroline, 1711-1786.  
173 Ibid., 248.  
174 Ibid., 219. A note from the series editor, W.S. Lewis.
that only four guests come at a time—he seems to have had trouble with people overlooking
this rule because he further elaborated it:

As Mr. Walpole has given offence by sometimes enlarging the number of four
visitors], and refusing that latitude to others, he flatters himself that for the
future nobody will take it ill that he strictly confines the number; as whoever
desires him to break his rule, does in effect expect him to disoblige others, which
is what nobody has a right to desire of him.

He emphasized that he consented to show his home between noon and three and adamantly
stated that the “house will never be shown after dinner; nor at all but from the first of May to
the first of October.”

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<td>33</td>
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Figure 8. Visitors to Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill House 1784-1796

175 Ibid., 220. See Figure 8. Number of visitors to Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill House, 1784-96. See
Figure 9. Chart of visitors to Strawberry Hill House, 1784-96.
In addition to visiting collections, royalty sometimes allowed visitors to their collections. John Evelyn describes at least six different occasions upon which he (and sometimes his guests) visited Charles II’s private collection. Because Evelyn was a founding member of the Royal Society and a member of court, Charles II personally showed him the various curiosities in his “closet.” In November 1660, Evelyn took some of his relatives to visit Charles II’s cabinet of curiosities. Evelyn was most intrigued by a model ship and a clock that showed “the rising and setting of the sun in the Zodiac,” which he described as being “very divertisant.” One month later, he took his siblings to court and enjoyed seeing assorted jewels, rare paintings, “an exquisite piece of Carving, two Unicorns’ hornes” and other rare objects.

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176 Evelyn, 423, 429.
177 Ibid., 412.
178 Ibid., 414.
CATALOGUES AND TRAVEL GUIDES

The publication and sale of catalogues and guidebooks ushered in a new era for museums and collections. These publications typically addressed people who had never viewed the particular attraction (although one could presumably purchase the books in order to have a remembrance after seeing a collection) and acted as good advertising. They allowed an even wider audience to encounter the wonders of the ancient world, the natural world, and the modern world. Published catalogues and guidebooks of collections and cities ushered in a novel way to travel—from one’s armchair in Newcastle, one could experience the sights of the British Museum and the Tower of London almost 300 miles away. Many of these guides offered extraordinary detail in their descriptions of objects, and so assisted the reader in mental transportation to wonders and curiosities.

Edmund Powlett wrote one of the earliest guides to the British Museum in 1761, stating that one of his main reasons for writing the 300-page guide was because his visit was less than ideal. As other visitors (like William Hutton) lamented, he did not have enough time—each visitor was allotted two hours for the entire collection—to view the numerous rooms and understand and appreciate the items located there.\(^{179}\) He acknowledges that he used the notes of several of his peers after they visited the museum in order to convey a more complete and organized layout of the vast collection.\(^{180}\) His purpose was not to give exacting descriptions of every item on display, but, rather, to direct visitors to the most interesting items so that they could view the objects for themselves and learn from their own observations. In particular, he

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\(^{180}\) Ibid., xvi.
notes that he expects many readers of this book to be ladies, as many in his acquaintance have
long “lamented the Want of something of this Kind” to help direct their visit and give an
overview of what to expect.\textsuperscript{181} In order to be even more useful, Powlett had his guidebook
printed in a duodecimo size so that it would easily fit in a pocket. In the second edition, he also
added an index, so that museum-goers could easily reference particular items they desired to see. He also explains that, though the book is a guide, one should not read the entire volume at
the museum, but should read it at home to prepare for a visit. The guide served as a
touchstone to particular items people wished to see in person.\textsuperscript{182}

A guide anonymously published in 1761 stated on the title page its purpose to serve as an update to an earlier publication because a guide to the British Museum had not been printed in the previous two or three years. It proposed to provide a “general and regular account of what is most important” and give explanations of various terms in the museum, in order to be very useful “to the judicious and curious” visitor in exploring the museum and contemplating the nature of things. The guide also explicitly states that it can be a “director” when examining the collection, be a keepsake for later perusal, and useful to educate those who are unable to view the museum in person.\textsuperscript{183}

David Henry, in \textit{An Historical Account of the Curiosities of London and Westminster} (1769), focuses on the Tower of London in the first volume of his three-volume work. In the title, he expresses his desire that this guide help visitors find the “most curious” items in the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{181} Powlett, xix-xx.
  \item \textsuperscript{182} Ibid., xxi-xxii.
  \item \textsuperscript{183} \textit{A View of the British Museum: Or, A Regular Account Relating What is most remarkable and curious to be seen there. Collected From Several authentic Reports. For the Benefit of Those who have a Mind to be acquainted with the principal Parts of it.} (London, 1761), iii.
\end{itemize}
Tower and to allow visitors “afterwards to relate what they have seen.”\textsuperscript{184} In the first pages, he outlines the prices to see the various attractions at the Tower: Six pence to see the lions, three pence to see the foot-armory, two pence to see the Spanish armory, two pence to see the train of artillery, three pence to see the horse-armory, and one shilling, six pence to the royal regalia/crown jewels alone, or one shilling per person in a group.\textsuperscript{185} Henry accomplishes his goals and provides great detail about all of the areas of the Tower of London open for visitors. He guides visitors through each section, pointing out the most interesting specimens and telling their history.

The 1797 version of \textit{A Companion to every place of Curiosity and Entertainment In and about London and Westminster} proclaims the authors’ desire to describe “every place of Curiosity and Entertainment In and about London and Westminster.”\textsuperscript{186} The authors defend this proclamation by arguing that the desire to see ancient and remarkable curiosities is a feeling that is widespread and commendable, so the guidebook fulfills this purpose in a multitude of ways.\textsuperscript{187} The aim of this particular volume is to provide detailed descriptions of all of the attractions that are worth seeing in London. The authors of the guide expand on their reasons for writing such a detailed guidebook later in the opening pages: To help highlight the most interesting objects in the cities so people know how to allot their time and spend it on the most worthy objects; so that the most entertaining subjects described in the guide “may enable those who, perhaps, will never have an Opportunity of seeing the Curiosities of London, to form

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{184} Henry, ix.
  \item\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., x.
  \item\textsuperscript{186} \textit{A Companion to every place of Curiosity and Entertainment In and about London and Westminster.} (London, 1797), title page.
  \item\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, iv. This also supports the growing positive feelings in the public toward “curiosity.”
\end{itemize}
Despite the lofty (and arguably biased) goal, the contributors to this work manage to cover many sights around the city and fulfill their goals in about 200 pages. In addition to everything else in the guide, the authors provide instructions on how to gain admittance to the various attractions that require a ticket (free or purchased), and a chart of rates for the coachmen and gondoliers from central areas in London to some of the places of interest described.

Three of the major collections described in this guide are the Tower of London, The Leverian Museum, and the British Museum. Like David Henry’s guide, A Companion provides an overview of the history of the Tower along with the entrance fees required, but the authors provide no times of operation. The authors use 36 pages to provide brief descriptions for about 120 items, very similar to the descriptions given by Henry in his section on the Tower. The Leverian Museum is a worthy attraction, a “great display of nature...very superb and diversified, and is worthy [of] the attention of the curious.” Each person must pay two shillings and sixpence to enter the collection, but again one finds no times of operation. The authors devote six pages to descriptions of the diverse specimens of natural history, weapons, native costumes, musical instruments, domestic utensils, and ethnographic artifacts, most of which reside in a number of glass cases for protection. The description concludes with an exhortation to view the wonderful specimens of man and nature that “all conspire to fill the beholder with a majestic awe” as he “contemplates the various being that inhabit the earth, and surveys the

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188 A Companion, iv.
189 Idem. The authors inform the reader that they “flatter [themselves] this Work will meet with a favourable Reception from the Public.”
190 Ibid., title page.
191 Ibid., 87.
works of nature with wonder!"\(^{192}\) The section on the British Museum consists of twenty-one pages that include the times and days of operation (taken from the *Rules and Statutes* printed by the museum trustees), and many pages expounding on the wonders contained in the nation’s premier museum. *A Companion* gives a fairly exact count broken down by category of the objects housed in the rooms of Montague House:

...ancient and modern medals and coins 23,000; cameos and intaglios about 700; seals 268; various vessels of semi-precious stones 542; miscellaneous antiquities 1,125; precious and semi-precious stones 2,256; metals, minerals, and ores 2,725; crystals 1,864; fossils, flints, and stones 1,275; earths, sands, and salts 1035; bitumens, sulphers, and ambers 399; talcs, micae, etc. 388; corals and sponges 1,421; shells 5,843; echini and echinitae 659; asterlae, trochi, entrochi 241; crustaceans 363; star fishes 173; fishes and parts of fishes 1,555; birds, and their parts, eggs, and nests 1,172; quadrupeds 1,886; vipers and serpents 521; insects 5439; vegetables 12,516; volumes of dried plants 334; anatomical preparations 757; miscellaneous natural things 2,089; mathematical instruments 55.\(^{193}\)

The authors are expansive in their praises and provide lengthy descriptions for the British Museum, but their words on the Leverian Museum seem overall more enthusiastic. Perhaps their attitudes reflected the prevailing feelings on the British Museum at the time and its general state of chaos. However, since the trustees of the British Museum did not provide a guidebook to the collection, the authors of *A Companion* provided a useful service so that visitors could streamline their visit, leave feeling educated and informed, and believe that they did not waste their time in the museum. William Hutton, among others, would no doubt have greatly appreciated this guide.

Just as with guidebooks, catalogues of collections also provided information about the displayed objects and the individual collector. Marjorie Swann examines the catalogues of one

\(^{192}\) *A Companion*, 91.
\(^{193}\) Ibid., 166-7.
collector who saw his published catalogue as “the culmination of the process of collecting [that] secures the identity and status of the owner of the collection, whether he actually creates the collection of simply buys it ready-made.”\textsuperscript{194} As a preserved record of an individual’s collection, the catalogue shows the prowess of the collector and depicts him or her as a connoisseur of exotic, rare, and beautiful items. One’s collection shows mastery of a vast and complex world and its inhabitants.\textsuperscript{195}

The authors of guidebooks often give incredibly detailed descriptions, laying out a map for readers to follow as if they were viewing the objects and rooms in person. One could almost create a floor plan from some of the descriptions alone. The authors’ descriptions created virtual tours for those unable to view the curiosities themselves. Many authors also commented that they wrote their guides because of the unsatisfactory or rushed tours that one might receive in person at an attraction. Hutton was thankful to have a guide for Don Saltero’s Coffee House and Curiosity Museum and would have welcomed one in order to take a self-guided tour of the British Museum. Readers might peruse the guide before viewing a collection, take it along to read while viewing, or browse through the printed description after taking a tour to help fix certain details in their memories.

When Uffenbach visited the repository of the Royal Society of London, he had already thoroughly read a description of the museum by Nehemiah Grew (1641-1712), which Uffenbach references in his description of the repository.\textsuperscript{196} Uffenbach inquired after certain items that he read about in the description from Grew, but he often heard “a rogue had stolen

\textsuperscript{194} Swann, 10.
\textsuperscript{195} Idem.
it away” or “it is corrupted or broken.” This emphasized the state of disrepair that the repository was in, but also indicated the care with which Uffenbach had read this work. He remembered specific items and expected to be able to see them with his own eyes, and not just in his mind.¹⁹⁷ Uffenbach mentions another text familiar to him, *Vieu of London*, in which he read a detailed description of the Royal Society’s library, which the duke of Norfolk had gifted to the Royal Society.¹⁹⁸

These catalogues and guide books allowed those who could not travel due to financial circumstance, distance from a place, health, time, or any other number of factors, to experience the wonders and curiosities for themselves. One might also read these accounts aloud to a group, thus providing a group experience. Perhaps people discussed the wonders and marveled at them together. Perhaps people retold these accounts in coffeehouses or women’s social circles. For individuals without the technology of modern centuries, vivid descriptions were imperative to a thorough understanding and visualization of a place they had no way of seeing with their own eyes.

In these publications, bias could creep in—as is evidenced in both Uffenbach’s accounts and Hutton’s descriptions—that might encourage or discourage a person to visit a particular collection, museum, or attraction in person. Presumably to keep the cost of printing down, there were generally few, if any, illustrations or images in these books beyond perhaps a frontispiece showing the grand edifice that housed the collection.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 102.
In addition to the detailed descriptions, authors of guidebooks often provided anecdotes about the objects and curiosities on display. While a more clinical mind might perceive these anecdotes as extraneous distractions, it might be better to view them as a means to connect more effectively with the objects and affix details in the mind. Having a meaningful, informative, or even humorous story to associate with an object makes the experience more rewarding and more memorable. Without vividly colored and minutely detailed visual representations, readers had to rely upon the detailed accuracy of authors and their insights in order spark their own imaginations and "theatre of memory" to gain a more fulfillment while reading about places, experiences, and events outside of their reach.199

According to the website of the Ashmolean Museum, early visitors could procure catalogues of the museum written by the janitor. Museum audio-tours may have come quite a way in terms of technology, but their humble roots speak to the underlying desire of visitors to understand the wondrous items they have the opportunity to see, and to view them at their own pace.

199 Ken Arnold and Susan Pearce, Early Voices, vol. 2 of The Collector’s Voice: Critical Readings in the Practice of Collecting. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), xii-xiii. The memory theatre of Guilio Camillo Delminio was a three part wonder that included an actual physical theatre to impart knowledge, objects and images meant to stimulate memories, and a way to help focus one’s attention and block out unwanted distractions from the outside world.
The Renaissance and the subsequent advent of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment transitioned visitors from intimate encounters with private collections to large-scale experiences at public institutions. As private collectors died and bequeathed their collections to other collectors or newly established museum entities, visitors also moved to see art, antiquities, natural history specimens, and new innovations in a new, public setting. Alongside the gradual transition to public exhibition spaces, English society embraced higher ideals of education for more of the population. Learning and education expanded beyond the bounds of the Grand Tour reserved for males in the upper echelons. Even those who did embark on the Grand Tour were expected to know of their nation, in order to display proper pride in their home and all of its attractions and desirable features before traveling abroad.  

With the knowledge that the British Museum was an institute for the nation that was to be accessible to the public, and the push to offer more expansive educational opportunities, the trustees of the British Museum decided to open from 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays from May through August, presumably to accommodate the working-classes who would not have leisure time during the day to visit the museum. The trustees felt that the museum should be used primarily by “learned and studious men,” but they understood that, due to the public nature of the museum (it was funded in part by public lottery), they should attempt to extend access to a population “as general as possible.” With each concession to public admission, however, there appeared another restriction to entrance. Tickets for admission,  

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201 *Statutes and Rules*, 8.  
202 Ibid., 6.
while free, had to be applied for a few days in advance and in writing—this excluded individuals who were not literate from entrance, unless they had a friend who could apply in their stead, or find someone who was selling an unwanted ticket.203

As the popularity of public learning grew, the size of the national collection grew. The famed machine of the British Empire appropriated many treasures and curiosities to display in the British Museum and other collections. Joseph Banks went with Captain Cook to the islands of the Pacific and Australia; explorers and diplomats sent home exotic artifacts from India, China, and Africa; South America and the Caribbean continued to be sources of exotic flora and fauna; early archaeologists returned from Greece with pieces of the Parthenon and thousands marble statues and examples of ancient of pottery. In addition to the Grand Tour and imperial travel, people began travelling more for pleasure. The letters and travel diaries represented in this paper are just a tiny example of the vast library of travel literature that individuals published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Figure 10. Admission ticket to British Museum, 1757 (from British Museum archives)

With new lands for discovery, new forums for display, new philosophies about education and learning, and new attitudes about access to museums, the British Museum and

203 Statutes and Rules, 9-10. See Figure 10. Admission ticket to British Museum, 1757 (from British Museum archives).
other museums around London continued to see growth in the number of visitors who came to experience the wealth of information and wonder in their collections. The visitor records from the earliest days of the British Museum are no longer extant. However, based on admission guidelines, one can extrapolate that about 60 to 75 people a day viewed the museum’s collections, adding up to about 5,000 visitors per year for the first few years. Museum records from 1774 indicate that numbers of visitors rose to about 10,000 that year, while the British Museum website published a record-breaking 6.7 million visitors for the year 2013.204

When contemplating modern museums, one often thinks of education, especially education of children. The trustees of the British Museum were not concerned with the education of children; they were more troubled with the safety of the precious objects in their care. The rules of the British Museum strictly forbade the admission of children and it appears that this rule was not softened until the 1830s.205 Horace Walpole was also wary of children being allowed to tour his private collection and indicated in his “Rules for admission to Strawberry Hill” that “They who have Tickets are desired not to bring Children.”206

The experience of a visitor to a private collection or museum in the eighteenth century was vastly different in many regards from the experience of a modern museum-goer. The museum trustees slowly relaxed admission policies to the collections, but still controlled access, to a large degree, based upon an individual’s status in society and level of education. However,

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204 British Museum Study Pack: Accessing Enlightenment, an Introductory Guide (London: The British Museum), 10. This publication is a modern guide to one of the exhibits at the British Museum. Rather than point out particular objects of interest, it asks the viewer questions of interest in order to stimulate thought and learning. See Figure 11, p. 101 for a chart representing the number of visitors in the early years.
206 Walpole, 220.
the desire to be amazed, to see wonderful objects, to travel without leaving the state, or to learn something new were all motives for going to a museum in the eighteenth century as they are today in the twenty-first century. Visitors to museums today can still see objects that belonged to early eighteenth-century museums. This tangible evidence of the past connects people across the centuries and across the continents, allowing humanity to experience the same curiosity and wonder throughout history.
GLOSSARY OF PEOPLE AND COLLECTIONS

Collectors

Ulisse Aldrovandi. (1522-1605) Considered the father of natural history and a prolific collector of botanical and zoological specimens. His collection at his home in Bologna was open to visitors. He kept extensive records of his visitors and, upon his death, his collection passed into the care of the government of Bologna.

Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, second duchess of Portland. (1715-1785) The duchess was a prolific collector of natural history specimens, especially shells and porcelain. She was among the founding members of the Bluestocking Society and a patron of the arts and learning.

Tiberius Cavallo. (1749-1809) Cavallo was born in Naples, Italy and immigrated to England in 1771 where he pursued a career in science. He published several works on physics and became a member of the Royal Society in 1779.

Dru Drury. (1725-1803) A British silversmith and entomologist who owned a vast collection of insects. His collection was one of the finest in the world and formed the basis for his three-volume work *Illustrations of Natural History* published from 1770 to 1782.

Lady Alethea Howard, Countess of Arundel. (1585-1654) Lady Howard occasionally travelled abroad with her husband, Thomas Howard. Like him, she was also interested in collecting. She tended to focus on porcelain, which was an acceptable feminine collection.

Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel. (1585-1646) Though he was a powerful courtier at the court of James I and Charles I, Howard gained his fame through his travels and collecting prowess. Horace Walpole named him the “father of virtu” in England. At his death, his collection included over 700 objects, mainly consisting of books, paintings, drawings, sculptures, and antique jewelry.

Dr. John Letsom. (1744-1815) He was born in the British Virgin Islands and relocated to London in 1766. Letsom was a notable Quaker physician and philanthropist in England. In 1773 he founded the Medical Society of London and was a founding member of the Royal Humane Society in 1774.

Dr. Richard Mead. (1673-1754) An English physician who did early research in how diseases were transmitted. He was also an extensive collector.


Sir Hans Sloane. (1660-1753) Sloane was born in County Down, Ireland, where he began his early collecting career on the beaches near his home. He journeyed to Jamaica as the personal physician to the new governor of the island in 1687, the same year Sloane was elected to the
Royal Society. He was also the personal physician to Queen Anne. Sloane collected thousands of natural history objects, antiquities, books, and manuscripts throughout his long life. He carefully displayed his collection in his home, to which he gracefully accepted visitors whom he then personally conducted on a tour. His enormous collection was the foundation of the British Museum.

John Tradescant, the Elder. (c. 1570s-1638) A gardener, traveller and collector of natural and man-made oddities. He opened a museum at his family home in Lambeth that he opened to the public. His collection formed the basis of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

John Tradescant, the Younger. (1608-1662) A traveller and gardener, Tradescant the Younger inherited his father’s collections, but did not add anything of significance to the museum. He had no male heir, so upon his death, the whole collection went to Elias Ashmole. There is some controversy about how Ashmole acquired the collection.

Horace Walpole. (1717-1797) Walpole was a politician, art historian, writer, collector, and man of letters. He opened his home at Strawberry Hill to curious friends, neighbors, and strangers so they could view the home, its furnishings, and the art and curiosities that Walpole collected. He published a pamphlet of about fifteen rules that he asked visitors to observe when viewing Strawberry Hill.

John Whitehurst. (1713-1788) A well-known natural philosopher, geologist, and maker of clocks and scientific instruments, Whitehurst also had a collection that fellow members of the Royal Society and scientists could view at his home.

Visitors

Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz. (1743-1812) An officer in the Prussian army and lectured on history at universities, Archenholz travelled Europe and wrote about the nations that he stayed in after his retirement from the army in 1763.

Anne Marie du Bocage. A French poet, playwright, and traveler. She was one of the first women to be offered membership in the academies of Rouen and Lyon.

John Evelyn. (1620-1706) English author and diarist, John Evelyn was also a member of the court of Charles II and a man of many social circles.

William Hutton. (1723-1815) William Hutton was a paper merchant and amateur historian from Birmingham. He went to London on business in 1784 and wrote an account of his experiences there. He is also the first modern person to walk the entire length of Hadrian’s Wall.

Sophie von La Roche. (1730-1807) A German novelist and traveler.
Ippolita Paleotti. A sixteenth-century Italian poet from Bologna. The only woman mentioned by name in the visitor logs of Ulisse Aldrovandi.

Barthélemy Faujas de Saint-Fond. (1741-1819) Faujas de Saint-Fond was a French geologist who travelled Scotland and England, visiting geological features throughout the countryside. He also visited the collections of many of his peers in the scientific community in and around London.

Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach. (1683-1734) A German scholar, traveller, and book-collector. He and his brother travelled across Europe and he described the sights they saw and the people that they encountered over the years. His book collection numbered over 12,000 volumes at his death.

Collections in London

Strawberry Hill. The collection at Horace Walpole’s home in Twickenham included many portraits of Walpole’s ancestors and friends, ancient Greek urns, and many historical curiosities. Walpole’s home was open to visitors many times throughout the year and he printed pamphlets with instructions on visiting as well as a description of the house and collections that was first published in 1774.

The collection of Hans Sloane. Sloane housed his collection at his residence first in Bloomsbury and then in Chelsea. He allowed visitors into his home and he personal showed them the curiosities there. His vast collection included around 130,000 different objects in various categories and became the foundation for the British Museum.

The collection of William Courten. Courten established his museum in 1684 in ten rooms at the Temple in London and opened it to the public. It was a vast collection of natural history specimens, particularly botany. He inherited some of his collection from his father and grandfather, but also employed men who travelled to new lands to acquire exotic flora and fauna for his growing collection. He purchased some objects from the wife of John Tradescant and after his death, Hans Sloane purchased the entire collection.

The British Museum. Founded in 1753 and opened to the public in 1759, the British Museum was the first such collection open free of charge to the people of Britain. The trustees of the Museum published rules and guidelines in an effort to keep order within the vast collection. The first foundations of the museum came from the private collection of Hans Sloane. For many years, admission was limited to between 60 and 100 visitors a day, but admission has grown to over 6 million attendees annually in recent years.

The Repository of the Royal Society. The Repository of the Royal Society began taking shape about 1661 at Gresham College. It was the official collection of books, manuscripts, phenomena of natural history, anatomical oddities, and early experiments in natural philosophy. The Repository was open to fellows of the society and their guests. The Royal Society moved to Arundel House temporarily in 1666 after the Great Fire of London. In 1710,
under the presidency of Sir Isaac Newton, the Repository found its own home on Crane Street. Nehemiah Grew published *Musaeum Regalis Societatis*, a descriptive guide to the collection, in 1681. By the time Uffenbach visited in 1710, the Repository was in a great state of disrepair. The Royal Society sold its collection to the British Museum in 1781, leaving only the library at the new Somerset House location. Interestingly, today the Society has a blog on the history of science entitled “The Repository.”

The collection of Dr. Richard Mead. Mead’s collection of paintings, rare books, classical sculpture, gems, and zoological specimens was available for study in his library at his Bloomsbury residence. The collection contained over 100,000 volumes and manuscripts. After his death in 1754, it took more than 50 days to auction the huge number of books.

The collection of Thomas Sheldon. The private collection of Thomas Sheldon consisted of many fine specimens of marine life.

The collection of Dr. William Hunter. According to *The Ambulator*, this museum was located in Windmill Street, Haymarket and open to the public. Hunter wished the collection to remain intact and available to view for thirty years from the time of his death.

Don Saltero’s Coffee House and Curiosity Museum. James Salter, a former employee of Hans Sloane, established this coffee house in about 1695 and it lasted until 1799. Patrons enjoyed viewing his collection of curiosities (mostly cast-offs from the collection of Hans Sloane) while drinking a cup of coffee and discussing the objects on display. The price of admission was a cup of coffee, and visitors were able to read a short catalogue of the collection in order to learn about what they saw.

The collection of John Whitehurst. Whitehurst was a geologist, specifically interested in the area around Surry. The specimens in his private home collection reflected this interest. Though the collection was small, Faujas de Saint-Fond praised its fineness and specificity.

The collection of Tiberius Cavallo. Cavallo kept his collection at his home and workshop and it consisted mainly of thermometers and other scientific instruments.

The collection of Dr. John Letsom. Letsom kept his collection focused on natural history at his home.

The collection of John Sheldon. A private collection in the home of John Sheldon. He had no posted times for admission and it seems a letter of introduction was necessary to gain a tour. His collection consisted of mostly anatomical specimens.

The collection of Dru Drury. The private collection of this gentleman consisted of over 11,000 insects from around the world.
The Leverian Museum. The museum was located at the beginning of Great Surrey Street on the fourth side of Blackfriars Bridge and cost 2 shillings, sixpence for each person to enter. The collection consisted of a great number of natural history specimens and artifacts from exotic cultures, particularly items from the South Pacific brought back by Captain James Cook. Ashton Lever established his London museum in 1773 and encompassed 16 rooms. He had previously shown his collection out of his home, but it became so popular that he had to turn visitors away who arrived on foot. The museum, while impressive, was not the financial success that Lever hoped it would be and he was forced to dispose of his collection in a lottery in 1786, which hardly sold any tickets and where it did not bring a fraction of what it was worth. James Parkinson won the lottery but he also had no financial success in his museum endeavor so he sold the collection in a sixty-five day auction in 1806.

Collections in Oxford

The Ashmolean Museum. Founded in 1683, the Ashmolean served as a template for the future British Museum. The bulk of the collection were the combined collections of Tradescant and Ashmole. Visitors paid an entrance fee of 6 pence when the museum first opened.

The Collections at the Bodleian Library. The Bodleian Library was not just a collection of books and manuscripts. Located here were also pictures, sculptures, coins, medals, scientific curiosities, and exotic and historical artifacts. Founded in 1619, the Bodleian is famous for not lending its books to readers. Due to the lack of heating (until 1845) and the lack of artificial lighting (until 1929), the library kept short hours: 10am to 3pm in the winter, and 9am to 4pm in the summer.

*Theatrum Anatomicum or Anatomie Scholae.* Originally used as an anatomy theater at Oxford, the building eventually took on the feel of a collection of art and curiosities. Uffenbach felt this collection would have been more appropriately housed in the Ashmolean.

Collections Elsewhere


The collection of Margaret Bentinck, Duchess of Portland. Located at Bulstrode Park, Buckinghamshire, England, the private country residence of the duke and duchess of Portland. The collection contained a large number of shells and snuffboxes. The collection was open to visitors to the duchess’s home, and a place for men and women of intellect and science to gather and discuss new ideas. After the death of the duchess, it was auctioned off over a thirty day period.
The collection of Richard Greene. Richard Greene housed his museum at the old register office of the diocese of Lichfield, England. His collection consisted of antiquities and natural curiosities including animals, stones, weapons, shells, and medals.

The Musaeum Tradescantianum. Located at the Tradescant family home in Lambeth, the collection was established in the 1630s and was also nicknamed “the Ark” due to its all-encompassing nature. It was the first museum open to the public in England and consisted of antique coins, engravings, books, specimens of zoology, geology, and botany, and many curiosities of nature and anatomy. Visitors were obliged to pay a nominal fee for entrance. John Tradescant the Elder founded this cabinet of curiosites and upon his death, his son, John Tradescant the Younger, inherited the entire collection. He eventually bequeathed the entire collection to Elias Ashmole.
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