Overview of the Collection
Title: E. Gordon Duff Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1882-1924
Bulk dates: 1890-1914
Collection Number: mssDF 1-1011
Creator: Duff, E. Gordon (Edward Gordon), 1863-1924.
Extent: 1,010 pieces in 13 boxes.
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2129
Email: reference@huntington.org
URL: http://www.huntington.org
Abstract: This collection consists of letters addressed to English bibliographer and book collector E. Gordon Duff (1863-1924), which relate primarily to Duff's interests in early English printing and stamped bookbindings.
Language: English.
Access
Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.
Publication Rights
The Huntington Library does not require that researchers request permission to quote from or publish images of this material, nor does it charge fees for such activities. The responsibility for identifying the copyright holder, if there is one, and obtaining necessary permissions rests with the researcher.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of item]. E. Gordon Duff Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Provenance
Purchased through A.S.W. Rosenbach from Sotheby's (Lot 332), March 18, 1925.
Biographical Note
Edward Gordon Duff (1863-1924) was an English bibliographer and book-collector. Duff was born in Liverpool and educated at Cheltenham College and Wadham College, Oxford, where he received a B.A. in 1887. He showed an aptitude for bibliographical work before he was twenty, and while at Oxford developed a plan for describing sixteenth-century books, started to collect early English books, and entered into correspondence with Henry Bradshaw, J. E. Bailey, and William Blades. In 1887, he was at work on a pamphlet on early stamped bindings.
Duff soon became recognized as a student of early English printing as well as an authority on early stamped bindings, and in 1890 was invited by William H. J. Weale to draw up a catalogue of cuts, including printer’s devices, alphabets, and border pieces appearing in books printed in England before 1530.
In 1893, Duff was named librarian of the newly established John Rylands Library. In this capacity he spent his time preparing the three volume catalogue of the Library, published in 1899, and answering questions sent in by scholars, librarians, and collectors about the John Rylands books and manuscripts. In 1900, however, Duff resigned his post at Manchester and spent the rest of his life doing independent bibliographical work. For a time he lived at Liverpool, but eventually settled at Oxford.
In the winter of 1899-1900 Duff and Robert Proctor founded the Type Facsimile Society. This was but one of the many projects that claimed his attention. From his pen came a steady flow of books and articles, mostly on the subjects of 15th and 16th century printing and bookbinding. Three times Duff was Sandars Reader in Bibliography at Cambridge University (1898-99, 1903-04, 1910-11). In 1905, The Bibliographical Society recognized his accomplishments by conferring honorary membership of the Society on him.
Duff's advice was frequently sought by collectors and librarians on such matters as a prospective purchase or the identification of some fragment of early printing. As a cataloguer-at-large Duff described the early English books in the Pepysian Library; the Pierpont Morgan English incunabula; and occasionally described a rarity for J. Pearson & Co. From the tone of the letters addressed to him, Duff appears to have been a most obliging and helpful friend and correspondent. In Who's Who his recreations were listed as: fishing, swimming, tattooing, and book-collecting. The year following his death
his books were sold at Sotheby's in two portions: early stamped bindings, March 16, 1925; general library, Mar. 17-19. Total of the sale was ¥8,100.

**Scope and Content**

This collection consists of letters addressed to Edward Gordon Duff which relate primarily to Duff's interests in early English printing and stamped bookbindings (in the letters of W.H. James Weale and William Younger Fletcher). Correspondents include: Harry Gidney Aldis, Thomas Graves Law, Ronald Brunlees McKerrow, Alfred W. Pollard, Robert Proctor, Charles Edward Sayle, Alistair N.D. Taylor, Sir Henry Thomas, and W.H. James Weale. Additional subjects in the collection include the preparation and publication of Duff's writings and that of his associates; the John Rylands Library (1893-1900); and Duff family genealogy (see the letters of Alistair Taylor).

Persons represented by five or more pieces:

- Aldis, Harry Gidney: 18 pieces
- Allnutt, William Henry: 7 pieces
- Amery, George Douglas: 6 pieces
- Bailey, John Eglington: 5 pieces
- Bennett, Richard: 5 pieces
- Blades, Rowland Hill: 5 pieces
- Bosanquet, Eustace Fulcrand: 13 pieces
- Bullen, Arthur Henry: 19 pieces
- Chawner, George: 5 pieces
- Claudin, Anatole: 11 pieces
- Cock, Alfred: 8 pieces
- Davenport, Cyril James Humphries: 7 pieces
- Delisle, Léopold Victor: 8 pieces
- Dziatzko, Karl Franz Otto: 5 pieces
- Ellis, Frederick Startridge: 5 pieces
- Fletcher, William Younger: 10 pieces
- Franks, Sir Augustus Wollaston: 7 pieces
- Gibson, Strickland: 15 pieces
- Gordon, Cosmo: 7 pieces
- Graves, Robert Edmund: 8 pieces
- Gray, George John: 7 pieces
- Greenwell, William: 13 pieces
- Haeghen, Ferdinand van der: 9 pieces
- Hall, Joseph: 9 pieces
- Hessels, Jan Hendrik: 5 pieces
- Hughes, Charles: 6 pieces
- Huth, Alfred Henry: 7 pieces
- Johnston, George P.: 12 pieces
- Johnstone, James Fowler Kellas: 9 pieces
- Law, Thomas Graves: 20 pieces
- Lawley, Stephen Willoughby: 7 pieces
- Lee, Sir Sidney: 7 pieces
- Leighton, Stanley: 5 pieces
- Lewis, Samuel Savage: 5 pieces
- Lovett, Richard: 10 pieces
- McKerrow, Ronald Brunlees: 20 pieces
- Murray, A. G. W.: 16 pieces
- Nicholsons, Edward Williams Byron: 7 pieces
Some notable items include:

- Aldis, Harry G. 1903, Oct. 3. Re: Scottish National Library
- Cockerell, Sir Sydney C. 1897, Feb. 10. To Charles Rowley.
- William Morris library (110 manuscripts, 800 printed books, exclusive of the modern ones) for sale at ¥20,000. Would like to see collection go to John Rylands Library.
- Gibbs, Henry Hucks, 1st Baron ALDENHAM. 1890, Mar. 17. "I am not without hope that, with your help, my saffron-colored prayer-book may yet be found in Bradshaw's chaos."
- Hessels, Jan Hendrik. 1887, June 28. "But I really hesitate taking every book away from Gutenberg as I should like to let him exist as a printer."
- Holme, Strachan. 1897, Nov. 9. Requests Duff to prepare a valuation of the Bridgewater Library for insurance purposes.
- Pollard, Alfred W. 1913, Jan. 9. "What I can't stomach is that these British Isles should be put on a level with Spain, as the only other country to which the Commission is sending a man of its own instead of the work being done by the natives. I dislike it even for the foreign incunabula in British libraries; but that it should be done for our own English books seems to me damnable."
- Proctor, Robert. 1899, Nov. 23. "She [Mlle. Pellechet] is a most estimable person but has no eye at all for types."
- Reed, Talbot Baines. [1892, July?] Re: the founding of the Bibliographical Society.
- Rosenthal, Ludwig. 1899, Nov. 11. The price of the Missal Speciale set at ¥15,000.
- Winship, George Parker. 1900, Feb. 5. Asks questions about the new John Rylands Library building.

**Arrangement**
Arranged chronologically.

**Indexing Terms**
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.

**Subjects**
Duff, E. Gordon (Edward Gordon), 1863-1924.
Proctor, Robert, 1868-1903.
John Rylands Library -- History -- 19th century.
Bibliographers -- Great Britain -- Archives.
Book collectors -- Great Britain -- Correspondence.
Bookbinding.
Printing -- Great Britain -- Early works to 1800.
Printing -- Great Britain -- History.

**Forms/Genres**
Letters (correspondence) Great Britain.

**Alternate Authors**
Aldis, Harry Gidney, 1863-1919.
Law, Thomas Graves, 1836-1904.
McKerrow, R. B. (Ronald Brunlees), 1872-1940.
Proctor, Robert, 1868-1903.
Sayle, Charles Edward.
Taylor, Alistair N. D.
Thomas, Henry, Sir, 1878-1952.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1</td>
<td>1823-1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2</td>
<td>1891-1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3</td>
<td>1894-1896 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4</td>
<td>1896 July-1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5</td>
<td>1898-1899 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 6</td>
<td>1899 October-1900 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 7</td>
<td>1900 March-December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 8</td>
<td>1901-1904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 9</td>
<td>1905-1907 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 10</td>
<td>1907 July-1910 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 11</td>
<td>1910 July-1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12</td>
<td>1912-1913 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 13</td>
<td>1913 August-1924</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>