

Full Length Research Paper

## A belonging mark: Handwritten ex libris

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The kinds of ex libris were mentioned, particularly, the handwritten ex libris in antique books in three Mexican libraries which protect antique books. The importance of identifying and keeping a record of the hand written ex libris was pointed out in the cataloguing process so that it can be registered in the catalogue libraries. There is a reflection of the utility of grouping in the phrase “handwritten ex libris” the private or institutional owner.

**Key words:** Belonging marks, ex libris, handwritten ex libris, stamps, fire marks, antique book, catalogued index.

### INTRODUCTION

The property marks such as *ex libris* gives an account of individuals or institutional groups that have given special importance to the book itself as a property object. This object also contributes to the development of knowledge in the different social groups.

Due to the diversity of handwritten notes in books, the hypothesis of the relevance of the use of the phrase “handwritten *ex libris*” in order to identify the owners is highlighted. Identifying and cataloguing the *ex libris* in the indexing process can contribute to the recovering of this specific data in the cataloguing index in libraries and it can become of great utility to the users or researchers interested in the history of books, libraries and reading.

The phrase “*ex libris*” shows the different ways of

expressing property by the owners in antique books.

This work aims to explore the presence of the belonging marks in antique books, specifically the handwritten *ex libris*.

### METHODOLOGY

Three Mexican libraries with antique bibliographic material were consulted from the period of the manual printing and up to 1821. The consulted libraries were the National Library of Mexico (UNAM), the Miguel Lerdo de Tejada Library (SHCP) and the Eusebio Dávalos Hurtado Library (INAH).

The phrases “*ex libris*” and “handwritten *ex libris*” were found and recovered from the indexes catalogues in these libraries to look for

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**Abbreviations:** UNAM, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; SHCP, Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público; INAH, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

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one hundred books registered in each one of them in order to confirm the data in the handwritten *ex libris*. The constant words of expression were identified and grouped as handwritten *ex libris*.

## Background

To write a book, it should be point out that, the sense of belonging has its antecedents in the publishing houses stamps in the front of books representing the names of the editors or printing houses. Dating back to history, however, there was found an Egyptian tablet with a dark blue hieroglyphic inscription which is known to have belonged to the pharaoh Amenophis III, dating from the XV Century BC. This tablet nowadays is guarded by The British Museum in London.

The printing revolution stated by Gutenberg (1400-1468) contributed to the expansion and distribution of books. So, the *ex libris* as a belonging mark has been used since the early XVth Century and became more relevant in the XVIII Century. During the XIX and XX centuries, some printers and engravers made printed *ex libris*. Their use has prevailed in printed and handwritten ways of marking by bibliophiles, public and private libraries, and in some individuals who like to write down their names in their books.

## Ex libris

The latin expression *ex libris* means “coming from” or “among books”, it points out a belonging mark denoting property by an individual or an Institution. The *ex libris* have been classified into three groups according to Count Colombí (Bouza, 1990):

- a) The handwritten *ex libris*, is done with pen, pencil or paintbrush. It is made by hand. It presents names and surnames of the owners or phrases or family crests related to the owner. It is generally found in the first sheets of the books.
- b) The *superlibris* consists of the owner mark, names and surnames which appear on the cover or binding of the book. These marks can also be coat of arms or monograms.
- c) The printed *ex libris*, stamped on paper sheets, presents the name of the owner. Sometimes, it can be accompanied by a phrase, a motto or an icon. It is generally a woodcut, metallic, or rock carving mark.

Besides the previous classifications, there are certain belonging marks in antique books found in Mexican libraries. These belonging marks give information on their owners through:

- a) Wax sealing, embossing or raised stamps, and those

made of rubber or wood, which need ink to be noticed.

- b) Fire marks made by a hot instrument in the fore edge of the text block during XVIth and XVIII centuries in Mexico.

To make a handmade property<sup>1</sup> mark from XV to XVIII centuries, the following materials were needed:

- a) Natural inks: Brown or sepia, made of red mimulus flowers; black inks were used since Middle Ages with ammonium sulphate plus walnuts solved in vinegar or wine.
- b) Calamus: The canes of the calamus plant were shaped like modern metallic nibs so they could keep ink in them in order to be used as pens.
- c) Birds, geese or raven feathers were used as pens from the IV century.
- d) Inkwells.
- e) Thecae were cases also called *librarias* or *calamarium* used to contain the writing instruments. The book is a means of information and knowledge; it contains intellectual topics as well as material representation, this means physical appearance like paper, typography, illustrations (engraving, drawings), binding and so on. It also contains information on the owner presented as a hand written note or a type of printing. This information on a person or an institution that presumes to be the owner is an *ex libris*.

The idea of property is innate to human beings and for the roman, laws property was a summary of rights. Property was used in three ways: using something (*ius utendi*), perceiving gains (*fructuendi*), misusing (*abutiendi*), possessing (*possidendi*), disposing (*disponendi*), and vindicating (*vindicandi*) (Torre and de la, 2000, p. 13). In this sense, possessing, disposing, using, and vindicating are related to the book and the owner in the *ex libris*. The hand written belonging marks imply the relationship between an individual or institution and an object, the book.

The kind of owners who used handwritten *ex libris* in what nowadays are called antique books were religious institutions, civilians, and religious persons. In the first case, they belong to different religious orders to which convents and religious schools belonged during the Mexican Viceroy's period. As an example, the following can be mentioned: the Jesus Company from Patzcuaro, Michoacan, the school of Saint Peter and Saint Paul (belonging to the Jesus Company), the Saint Joseph of Tacubaya convent (belonging to the Dieguinos order), and the Old Convent of the barefoot Carmelites of Mexico

<sup>1</sup> This ways of expression denoting property were also used in other objects such as fabrics. This can be observed in a hand embroidery made with beads in which we can read “I serve my owner Manuela Garay”. Exposition: *Models of Virtue: embroidery and frayings from XVIIth to XXth centuries*. Franz Mayer Museum, July 2016, Mexico City.

City among others.

An example of uses and regulations of a belonging mark is shown in the Ordinance X given by the bishop Francisco Fabian de Fuero (1719-1801) for the Palafoxian Library in Puebla, Mexico. In this, we can read: "in all books in this library... there must be an inscription saying: 'Saint John college' on pages 10, 20 and 40. (Castro cited by Carreño, 2008: 35)

As an example of particular use of *ex libris*, there is the historian and man of science, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645-1700) who used to write down his name, the cost of the book, and sometimes a personal thought in all his books. This way we can infer the topics, this wise New Spain man was interested in. He was keen on Science, History and Architecture, to name a few. The National Library of the National University of Mexico keeps in charge some of his books containing *ex libris*. For example, in the front of the book, *De Architectura Libri X*, this handwritten note: "D. Carlos de Sigüenza y Gongora. 1673. 2p. A Lorenzo Beson", is noted.

### The index catalogue and the information professionals

The presence of the different belonging marks *or ex libris* and the handwritten notes are important for the registration and recovering in the index catalogues.

In librarianship disciplines, the registered information in a data base tend to be normative and they have to use resources such as Resource Description and Access (RDA) and the Anglo- American Cataloguing Regules. This one was consulted in Spanish as *Reglas de Catalogación Angloamericanas* (2004, 2.1 8 F1) and in the last section it points out: "Make notes on special features of the copy in hand. These include rubrication, illumination, and other colouring, manuscripts additions, binding (if noteworthy), provenance and imperfections". From this part and on, registering of the belonging marks, the *ex libris* among them, and specifically the phrase handwritten *ex libris* is considered to be a worthwhile job.

Organization, preservation and dissemination of different works related to libraries are conducted by specialized librarians as well as some other documentary makers or related disciplines workers. The bibliographic description and personal notes in a book is relevant since they can be catalogued as added external elements. The register of these *ex libris* in the general notes section included in the MARC format when cataloguing the books helps to recover the related information in the libraries index catalogues.

Hence, it is important to include the presence of the different *ex libris* in antique books when establishing

regulations on working with these in order for them to appear in the index catalogue. Palaeographic examinations and the instruments, and practice in this discipline ease identification and comprehension of handwritten *ex libris*. The cultural background and interests of the librarian or cataloguer must prevail too.

### RESULTS

The finding of the phrase *handwritten ex libris* lead to the recovering from the index catalogues of the following phrases (Table 1): Del uso de (used by); Es de (it belongs); Es del (it is); Este libro pertenece a (this book belongs to); Lo compré (I bought it); Pertenece a /al (it belongs to); Sirvo a mi dueño (I serve to my owner); Soy de (I am a belonging of).

These phrases are followed by the name of the private owner or the name of an institution and sometimes may include the date of purchase and price of the book. Some other latin expressions are: Bibliotheca (a space designated to books); Pertinent ad (belonging to); Ad usum (for the use of/ by use of).

An example of these phrases can be found in the book, *Philosophia Thomistica...* "Pertenece al uso de fr. José Servando, Domingo de Sta. Theresa de Jesus de Mier y Noriega, del O[rden] de Predicadores. Suareaz venia prelatorez [permiso del prelado.-Suarez]" (belongs to the use of fra. Jose Servando, Domingo of Saint Theresa of Jesus. Theresa of Jesus of Mier and Noriega, of the O[rder] of Preachers. Suareaz venia prelatorez [approval of prelate Suarez]), this copy can be handled in the Miguel Lerdo de Tejada Library.

Nowadays, it is relevant to identify the kind of readings historical characters that participated in the Independence War in Mexico such as Fra Servando Teresa de Mier (1765-1827) went through. The book *La Portentosa vida de la muerte, emperatriz de los sepulcros...* (1792) has next data on it: "Sirvo a Mariano N. [...] Estrada desde el dia 12 de henero de 1795 (I serve to Mariano N[...] Estrada since January 12th, 1795), it can be found in the Eusebio Dávalos Hurtado INAH Library.

Some other examples of Institutional owners are: "Pertenece a la libreria de el Convto. de San Diego de Mexco" (belongs to the Saint Diego Convent Library of Mexico), in the book *Primera regla de la fecunda madre Santa Clara of Assis...* (1756). "Pertenece al Con[ven]to de Ntro. P.S. Agustin de Patzcuaro" (belongs to C[onven]t of Our. P.S. Agustin of Patzcuaro), in the book *Fratris Petri de Aragon...* In *secundam secundae Diui Thomae Doctoris Angelici comentariorum: tomvs primvs* (1584). National Library, UNAM.

**Table 1.** The quantity of phrases and the total number of times they were found.

Phrase	Total number of times used and located in books
Pertenece a /al (it belongs to)	145
Soy de (I am a belonging of)	45
Del uso (used by)	40
Sirvo a mi dueño (I serve to my owner)	20
Ad usum (para el uso de/ del uso de) (for the use of/ by use of)	20
Lo compré (I bought it)	10
Bibliotheca (a space designated for books)	10
Pertinent ad (pertenece a) (belonging to)	10

From a revision, it was found that the index catalogue of the Eusebio Dávalos Hurtado INAH Library has elemental data from the frontal pages as well as of personal notes in the volume. So, in some cases, the *ex libris* gives some partial information. From a physical revision of the books, the following were found:

1. *Handwritten Ex libris* is a constant in the front pages, in the verso page, and in the first pages called front free or end papers.
2. A handwritten *ex libris* in the possible key page and in the same belonging mark in the front page.
3. A handwritten super *libris* in which this information was omitted in the register
4. In the three Mexican Libraries consulted for index catalogues, the use of the following expressions was found: owner note, handwritten note and autograph.

## DISCUSSION

The resulting information shows that the belonging marks represent phrases, they do not show shapes or family crests as it is said in the classification made by Bouza (1990). The use of the phrase, handwritten *ex libris* to group the different kinds of owners, facilitates the identification and recovering in the index catalogue when looking for handwritten notes. An example of this could be: *ex libris*, handwritten, "Soy de Franc. Javier Garcia" (I am a belonging of Franc. Javier Garcia).

The phrase handwritten *ex libris*, delimitates the ways for looking and identifying information while looking for handwritten notes giving general results for users or researchers and which implies a new data research.

When identifying handwritten notes, specific use of meanings to group and typify the handmade notes is required which can also be reading, censorship or editing notes. Accurate meanings allow regular register and recovering of information.

## Conclusions

Identifying the names of the owners through handwritten *ex libris* leads to knowledge on the social and historical backgrounds under the book bought, read and used as a source of knowledge.

Using and registering the handwritten *ex libris* allows grouping and identifying the different phrases used by the former owner of a book. It also facilitates the search and location in the index catalogues and it is useful for researchers and users when looking for books, libraries and reading history.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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## Libraries website

- Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, Library, SHCP [http://codexvirtual.com/bmlt2/http://www.hacienda.gob.mx/cultura/museo\\_virtual\\_biblioteca\\_lerdo/index.htm](http://codexvirtual.com/bmlt2/http://www.hacienda.gob.mx/cultura/museo_virtual_biblioteca_lerdo/index.htm)
- National Library of Mexico, UNAM <http://www.iib.unam.mx/>  
[http://catalogo.iib.unam.mx/F/-/?func=find-b-0&local\\_base=BNM](http://catalogo.iib.unam.mx/F/-/?func=find-b-0&local_base=BNM)
- Eusebio Dávalos Hurtado, Library INAH <http://bnaah.inah.gob.mx/index.php>