

Wellcome Library's Collections – An introduction

Theories and Methods: Literature, Science and Medicine

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Aims:

- Introduction to Sir Henry Wellcome
- Origins of his collections
- Overview of Library's collections
- Uniting themes



Sir Henry S. Wellcome 1853 -1936



'TABLOID' FIRST-AID
TRADE MARK BRAND
FOR ALL EMERGENCIES

BURROUGHS WELLCOME & CO LONDON (ENG.)
NEW YORK MONTREAL SYDNEY CAPE TOWN MILAN SHANGHAI





A DRUIDIC SACRIFICE OF PRISONERS OF WAR.

"Prisoners of war are to be slain upon the altars,
or burnt alive in wicker, in honour of the gods."

Antient druidic law.

Wellcome Images

HSW as collector

- ‘Collect the everyday’
- Scale of collection
- Methods and approach
- Collectors





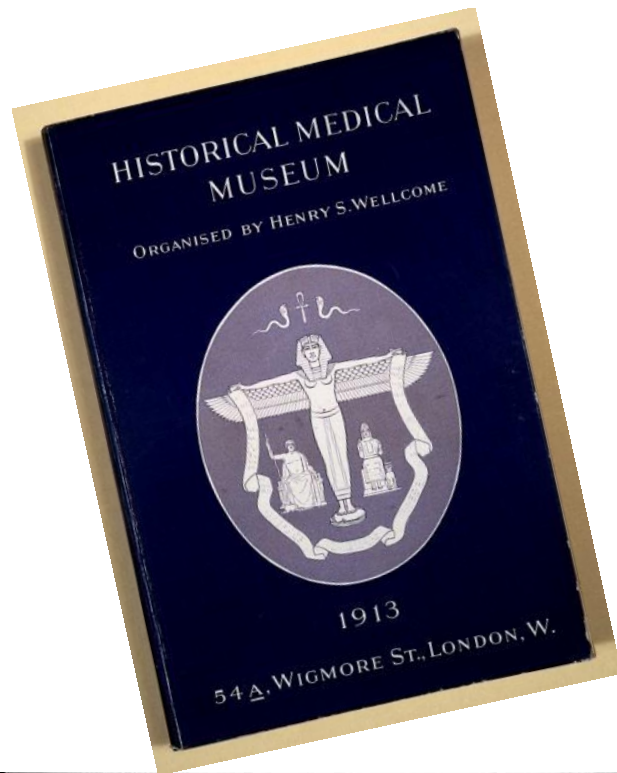
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Origins of Library

- 1949: Library formally opens to the public
- 1968: Wellcome Institute inaugurated
- 1979: Contemporary Medical Archive Centre
- Early 1980s: Museum collections passed on to Science Museum
- 1980s-90s: Growth of collections
- 2007: Wellcome Library re-opens as part of Wellcome Collection

Opening of Wellcome Historical Medical Library

“The library contains special collections on, for example, alchemy, occultism, veterinary medicine, and folklore, mediaeval texts, and original manuscripts from such figures as Hunter, Pasteur, Lister, and Florence Nightingale. There is also a large collection of modern works”

(*BMJ*, 10 December 1949)



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History of Medicine Collection

- Over 96,000 volumes, 1850 onwards
- Anatomy to Zoology
- Biographical works
- Literature
- Journals (print and online)
- Reference works
- UK Web Archive
- Always expanding



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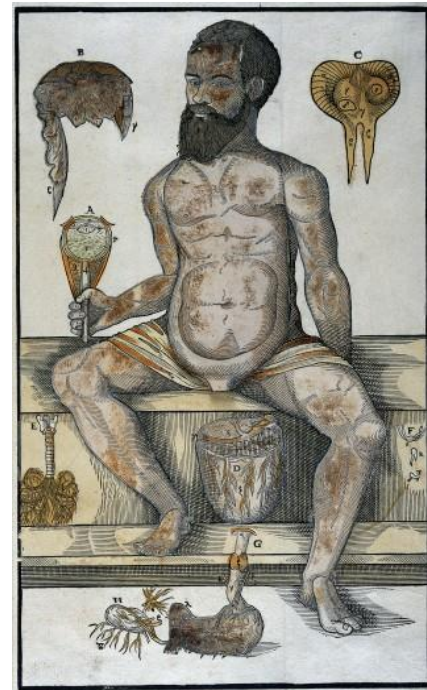
Archives and Manuscripts

- Classical period to Present day
- Such themes as: Psychiatry, physiology, study of sex
- Almost every aspect of European science represented
- Manuscripts: lecture notes, casebooks, diaries
- Personal Papers (PP) – Crick, Stopes, Klein
- Societies (SA) – Eugenics, ASH, ALR
- Autograph Letters
- Born Digital material
- [Sources Guides](#)



Rare Books Collection

- From 1460s to 1850
- Approx. 70,000 items
- ‘Great Names’ but also ordinary practitioners
- Anatomy, Herbals, Alchemy, Food & Drink
- Bibliographical importance of works
- [EEBO](#) and [ECCO](#)



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Paintings, Prints and Drawings

- Over 250,000 items
- Documentary resource, rather than art collection
- All art techniques covered
- Photographs: John Thomson collection
- [Wellcome Images](#)



Ephemera

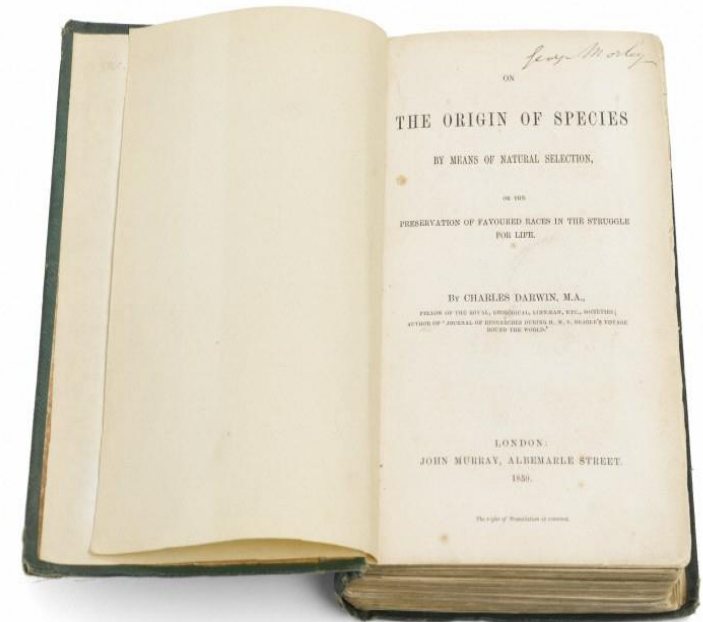
- Over 30,000, mainly single sheet items
- Mainly post-1850
- Pharmaceutical advertising
- Product literature
- Public information handouts
- Campaign literature



Wellcome Images

Medical Collection

- **Post-1850 Medical and Scientific Literature**
- **Monographs, Textbooks, Pamphlets**
- **Serials and Journals (print and electronic)**
- **Foreign and colonial publications**
- **Asylum Reports**
- **Most complete set of Medical Officer of Health reports in the country**



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Asian Collections

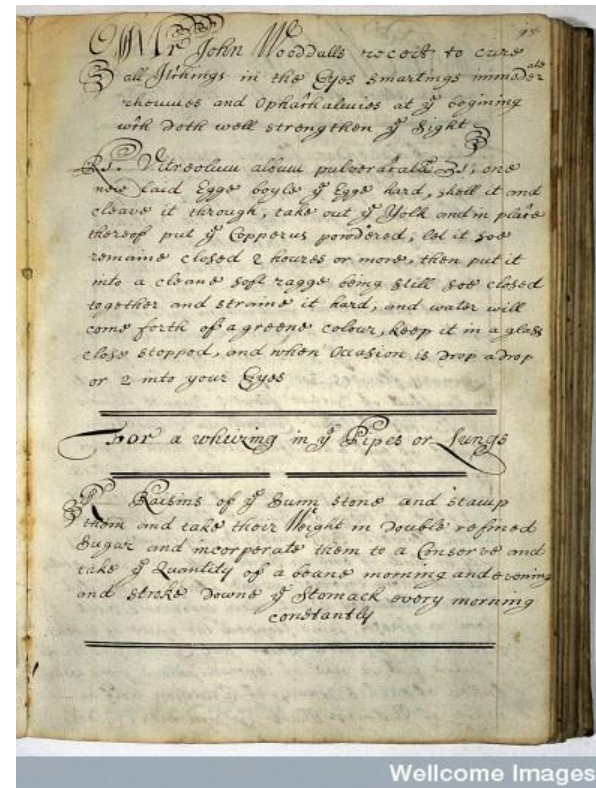
- 46 different languages
- Geographical Spread
- Subject coverage
- Format



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Online Resources

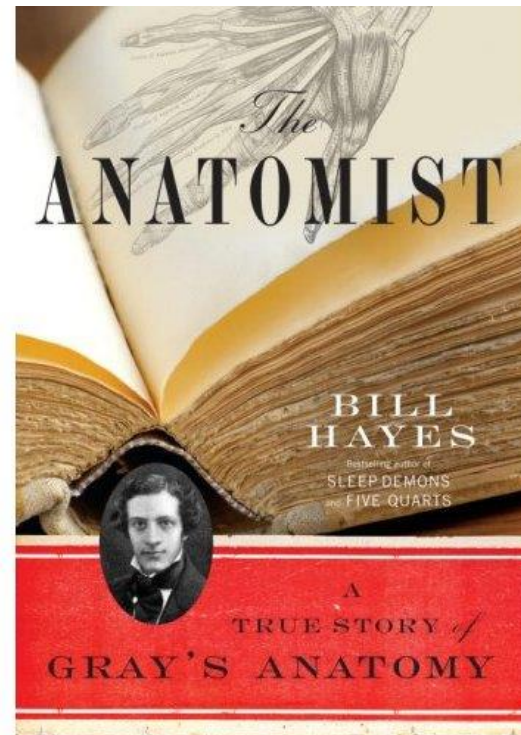
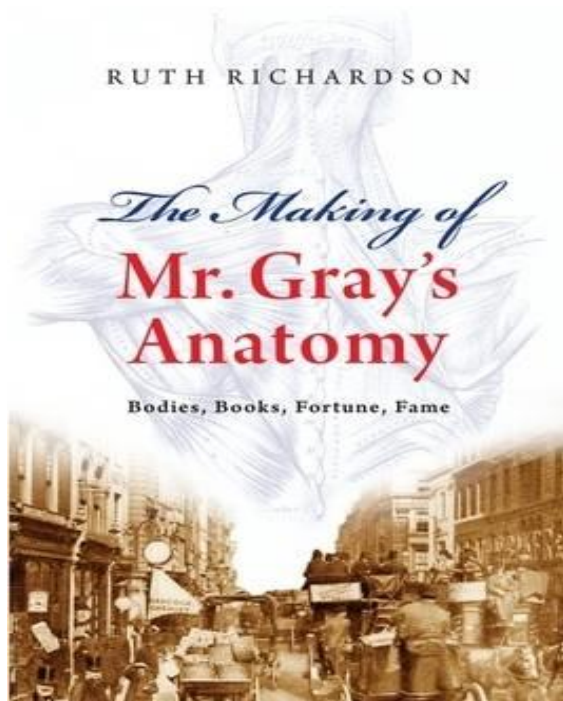
- [Subscription Databases](#)
- Wellcome Images
- [Wellcome Film](#)
- [17thC Recipe Manuscripts](#)
- Arabic Manuscripts



Library's resources

- Facilities conducive to study
- [Free Library Workshops](#)
- Contextualising nature of Wellcome Library
- Europe's most comprehensive collection on the History of Medicine

Vandyke Carter papers (MSS.5809-5826)





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Concluding thoughts

- Balance between 'Great Men' and 'Lesser known'
- Patients and Practitioners
- Items and Collections
- Importance of interpretation and re-interpretation

Wellcome Library

- Main website - <http://library.wellcome.ac.uk>
- Wellcome Images - <http://images.wellcome.ac.uk>
- Wellcome Library Blog – <http://wellcomelibrary.blogspot.com>
- Email us - library@wellcome.ac.uk