The need to provide the friars with a sound theological formation for preaching and pastoral care forced the Franciscan order to establish a hierarchical network of convent schools in the Middle Ages. This inevitably necessitated the acquisition of books, both individually and institutionally, through the foundation of convent libraries. There were three main ways through which the friars enlarged their book collections: donations and bequests, purchase, and, to a limited extent, book production within the order. The evidence coming from the testamentary records and possession notes on the Franciscan manuscripts, combined with the testimony of the order’s statutes, reveals the enthusiasm of the friars to collect and keep books, and the difficulties it prompted.

While there has been considerable interest in the monastic libraries of the period before the twelfth century and the humanist libraries of the fifteenth century and afterwards, surprisingly very little has been published on the libraries of the mendicant orders. No comprehensive study has been performed on the acquisition of and trade in books by individual friars. In the case of the Franciscans, which will be dealt with here, the problem was partly the lack of evidence, as the order’s constitutions for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are relatively few in number and do not contain sufficient information on the regulations concerning books and libraries. However, a rich source of evidence, hitherto overlooked by historians, are the Franciscan


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* I would like to express my gratitude to the foundation of Nostra Aetate, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, for their benevolent grant to study in Rome in 1999–2000, and to the Congregation of Saint Basil in Toronto for awarding me the Joseph Wey fellowship in 2001–2002. Without their support, the research for this paper could not be carried out.
manuscripts themselves. Numerous manuscripts that were once in the possession of the Franciscans contain notes concerning the ownership and purchase of books, along with testamentary notes and colophons written by the scribes. These notes provide invaluable evidence on the acquisition and circulation of books and on the trade in books.

Two facts surface from the investigation of this evidence. First, the Franciscan order formed quite a sophisticated system for the institutional accumulation, circulation, and maintenance of books, which paralleled the high degree of intellectualisation that the order underwent both in practice and attitude during the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Such a sophisticated system would have been totally redundant if there had not been an extensive educational network. Second, along with this development, friars acquired and kept books privately. Although they were only allowed the use of books, in practice it appears that they enjoyed full rights over them, including the right to sell them. This transformed book acquisition into a means of investment for friars with material ambitions; it also thereby eventually sowed the seeds of severe internal conflict within the order.

The acquisition of books in the Franciscan order was not initiated from the very start, as was the case with the Dominicans, but rather it took place gradually with the entry of scholars into the order, and with the establishment of an educational network. Saint Francis of Assisi, founder of the order, had no intention of welcoming many books into the order. In the general chapter of 1220, when the order was under the vicariate of Peter Catani, a decree was passed that prohibited the possession of books. However, the founder’s intentions are not always the most influential factor in determining the course of a new religious order, and that was largely the case with the Franciscans. Due to a deliberate settlement policy adopted by the provincial ministers, the friars established themselves quickly in university towns like Paris, Oxford, and Bologna, and, before long, started to frequent the theology classes. After the death of Francis in 1226, the first signs of an educational organisation appeared. The first mention of the term lector as an office of the order dates from the year 1228, in the chronicle of Jordan of Giano. Two years later, a Franciscan delegation complained to the pope about the strictness of the rule and asked whether they really had to get rid of their books even if they served the study of theology. The result was the first and one of the most important pieces of papal legislation concerning books. As a pope who believed in the significance of theological education in the fight against heresy, Gregory IX saw no harm

in allowing friars to study theology. He declared the papacy the possessor of all the friars' books, and that the friars would merely have the use of them. After 1230, provincial and general chapters passed many statutes dealing with the acquisition, treatment, and maintenance of books within the order. The papal statutes of 1336, which encouraged and regulated the intellectual activities of both Franciscans and Dominicans, demanded that convents should acquire a sufficient number of copies of works on grammar, logic, philosophy, and theology according to their size, number of residents, condition, and status.

The influx of books into the medieval Franciscan order seems to have taken place through three main channels, which shall be discussed in this paper: donations and bequests, purchase, and writing and copying.

**Donations and Bequests**

From early times onwards, the great popularity of the Franciscans enabled them to accumulate a large number of books through donations and wills. There is considerable evidence from the thirteenth century, when cardinals, bishops, and other prelates left books to Franciscans. For someone outside of the order, there were two ways of donating the books. Either the book would be donated directly to the *armarium*, that is, the library of the convent, and become a common property, or it would be donated for the use of a friar on the condition that, after the friar's death, the book would go to the convent, in which case the friar could not sell or exchange the book.

In the early days of the order, when friars had not yet started to possess books individually, most of the book donations were of the first type. The evidence suggests that a majority of book donations were made to convents where there was a school of theology. The earliest substantial book donation I have found was in 1224 when a certain Bartholomew de Bruyeres donated ten books to the Paris convent. The same year, a canon of Padua Cathedral, Master Aegidius, donated a manuscript containing the sermons of Saint Anthony of Padua to the Franciscan convent of Padua, where there was one of the earliest Franciscan schools.

Around 1240, a canon and archdeacon of the same cathedral, Master Ugutio, donated to the same convent (Padua) twenty-five volumes of the Bible with commentaries by the church fathers, written in Parisian letters. By the time Jocelyn was dead, the Bristol convent already

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had a *studium*.\(^{12}\) Friar Ralph Maidstone, who served as bishop of Hereford and died in 1243, gave the Canterbury Franciscans glossed Gospels,\(^{13}\) and a glossed copy of the Epistles of Paul to the Oxford Franciscans.\(^{14}\) The most remarkable book donation of these early years was the bequest of the famous bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste. At his death, he left his entire library to the Franciscan convent in Oxford.\(^{15}\) In 1266, fourteen books were donated to the convent of Exeter, which had a school, by the archdeacon of the town.\(^{16}\) In 1271, Cardinal Henry of Susa left to the Franciscan convent of Montpellier, another convent with a well-established *studium*, a *Biblia Postillata* in two volumes.\(^{17}\) One of the two significant book donations of the late thirteenth century was the bequest of the Franciscan cardinal Bentivegna Bentivegna, who left all his books to the convent of Saint Fortunato of Todi in his testament dated 1286.\(^{18}\) The other was the donation of another Franciscan cardinal, Matteo d’Aquasparta, who gave half of his seventy-six books to the convent of Todi, and the rest to the Assisi convent in 1287.\(^{19}\)

From the second half of the thirteenth century onwards, the evidence points to the frequent occurrence of the second type of donations, where a designated friar was to have the use of books in his lifetime. Cardinal Vicedominus Vicedomini, in his testament dated 1 July 1276 at Rome, left to the Franciscan convent of Piacenza Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, and Bonaventura’s commentary on the third and fourth book of the *Sentences*. The cardinal stipulated that his nephew, Philip Vicedomini, should have the use of the said books.\(^{20}\) Cardinal John Cholet (1281–1292) bequeathed all his books of logic and natural philosophy and his *Originalia* of church fathers to the friar Peter of Soncegions, to be handed on to the Parisian convent of the Franciscans after Peter’s death.\(^{21}\) Lay people similarly followed the convention of leaving books to their

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Franciscan relatives or friends. For example, around 1260, a resident of Lucca bequeathed all his books to his Franciscan son, on the condition that the convent of Lucca would have them after the son’s death. By bequeathing the book to a friar with the post-mortem condition that the books would go to the convent library, he prevented the friar from selling or exchanging the books during his lifetime. Some book bequests seem to have the same purpose of all other types of alms-giving: in the year 1383, a certain Ser Dominicus Allegri from Florence donated the books of Concordance of Joachim of Fiore to the friar Thebaldus de Casa in the presence of a notary and witnesses with the request that the friar should pray for his soul.

Why did these donors take such pains to enunciate that their beneficiary was to have the use of the books for life? Was it not enough just to give the book to the friar? According to the papal regulations of 1336, it was not. If a donation or a bequest was made to a friar without a condition for use (sine determinato usu), then this friar had to inform his superiors that the bequest was of this nature. In that case, the guardian would take the responsibility of the bequeathed items. If the friar already had sufficient number of books to study, or was not able to use the books left to him, the guardian could give the books to some other friar.

Along with the donation of books, giving money for the purchase or copying of books was also quite common. In 1237, Leone da Perego, later Archbishop of Milan, gave a subsidy to the Franciscan convent in Milan for the purchase of books. In 1253, a layman Zilio Teco da Marostica left one hundred lire to the convent of Vicenza pro facere libros. The Franciscan Cardinal Bentivegna Bentivegni left money to Friars John and Jacobello for books and other necessities. In an interesting will, dated 1289, the widow of the count of Vicenza, Zilborga, left to the young layman Artuxio two hundred lire for books if he would enter the Franciscan order, and nothing otherwise. The countess also left money to a number of friars for the express purpose of buying books, and added the condition that after the death of these friars the books

26. This evidence comes from Vicenza, Biblioteca Bertoliana, S. Lorenzo, Pergamene b. I. Sartori, Archivio Sartori, 1, 1264.
bought with the money she left would go to the *armarium* of the Franciscan convent of Saint Anthony in Padua. One cannot help thinking that at least one of the *fidecomissarii* of the countess was a Franciscan from the convent of Padua who had counselled her to add this particular condition to the will. We come across a similar condition in the year 1300 in the testament of a lay woman, Beatrice Tolomei. She left twenty-five lire to five Franciscan friars, and ten lire to one friar, for books on the condition that “after the death of these friars, the books they have bought with the bequeathed money were to go to the *armarium* of the convent of St Anthony in Padua, and they were not to be exchanged or damaged in any way.” It seems that in the later thirteenth century, some friars were openly asking money from relatives and seculars to buy books. This practice was discouraged by the constitutions of the order, unless it was accompanied by an official licence of petition.

The friars’ ambition to collect books facilitated the expansion of the Franciscan libraries through internal donations and bequests. A great source of books for the convent libraries was the works left by deceased friars. Often, friars bequeathed their books to their convents while they were yet alive. In 1285, Friar Henry of Circulis noted down in his book of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and in his psalter, that he had given these books to the convent of Florence, so that no one should remove them from there. However, he reserved to himself full right of their use during his lifetime. Thebaldus de Casa, who was the guardian of the Franciscan convent in Florence between 1380 and 1410, wrote similar versions of the following note into numerous manuscripts in his possession: “This book is for the use of brother Thebaldus de Casa. He, while yet living, has conceded this book to the *armarium* of the Convent of Friars Minor in Florence.” The motive of putting such a note into the book itself was obviously to prevent the misappropriation of the books by other friars or convents, or probably even by the provincial chapter, which claimed the right to the books of the deceased friars. According to the provincial constitutions of Padua, after a friar’s death, all his books were to be transferred to the provincial chapter by the custodian of his convent, and then the books were to

be sold by the custodian to the friars of their custody for three-quarters of their normal price.\(^{35}\) It is particularly worth noting that if the deceased friar was a lector, the situation was even worse for the convent. In that case the books were not sold, but were reserved to the discretion of the provincial minister and chapter, who would distribute the books equally to those whose books had to be assigned by the minister.\(^ {36}\) It is possible that some lectors transferred their books to the convent once they quit the office. For example, in 1353, the officials of the Todi convent made a list of twenty-six books placed into the convent library of Todi, which once belonged to friar Raynaldus Francisci.\(^ {37}\) It is possible that Raynaldus quit his office around this time perhaps out of old age, because in 1356 a monetary transaction was recorded in the Franciscan convent of Assisi regarding the garments of a friar Raynaldus, who was referred as “omnis lector.”\(^ {38}\)

The friars who were entering the order also contributed to the expansion of the convent libraries by bringing their own books into the Order. For example, a Franciscan novice, Lambertinus Cazanimici of Bologna, in his testament written in 1249, reserved four hundred lire for himself to buy books after his profession. If he were to die before joining the order, the money would go to the convent of Bologna for books and other necessities.\(^ {39}\) It seems that, like Lambertinus, many friars brought with themselves either money or books to the order.\(^ {40}\) The practice must have been well established as the 1310 general chapter declared that novices could not leave themselves anything in the will they made upon entering the order; however, they could be provided with the books they bequeathed to the convent.\(^ {41}\)

**Purchase**

In 1357, the famous bibliophile, Richard Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, complained in the presence of a papal audience in Avignon that he was not able to find “any useful book for sale; for they have all been bought up by the friars, so that every convent has a large and noble library, and every friar with standing in the studia has a noble library.”\(^ {42}\) Although there might be exaggeration

\(^{35}\) “Et minister cum diffinitoribus ponat duos fideles qui praedictos libros aestimant fideliter, secundum communem aestimationem sicut unus frater vendit alteri librum suum; et secundum illum aestimationem custodes vendant eos in custodis suis fratibus qui primo petierint, dimissa eis preter quarta parte aestimationis factae ut dictum est:” “Ordinazioni dei Capitoli Provinciali Umbri,” 16.

\(^{36}\) “Item libri lectorum morientium-non-vendantur, sed reserventur provisioni ministri et capituli provincialis, qui eos aequiliter distribuat vel distribui faciat per custodias per illos qui ad hoc per ministrum debeat assignare:” “Ordinazioni dei Capitoli Provinciali Umbri,” 16.

\(^{37}\) Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, MS 185, fol. 42v–43r. The list has been edited in E. Menestò, “Gli inventari trecenteschi della biblioteca del convento francescano di San Fortunato di Todi,” in *Immagini del Medioevo*, Saggi di Cultura Medioevale (Centro Italiano di Studi sull’alto Medioevo: Spoleto, 1993), 229–30.


\(^{40}\) Humphreys, 49; Roest, 222.

\(^{41}\) Humphreys, 65.

in this statement, other evidence supports the thesis of Fitzralph that Franciscans were fervent buyers of books both at the institutional and individual level. Although donations helped the convents to expand their armarium, naturally friars could not depend on them to run a sophisticated educational organisation. There was a need for the regular acquisition of books to maintain the continuity of intellectual studies in the order.

Starting from early times onwards, the convents bought books from alms through the initiative of guardians. These purchases were primarily directed towards providing the friar-students with the appropriate textbooks for their studies in the convent schools. For example, Brother Guido de Fraxia, the guardian of the Florentine convent, bought the Decretum of Gratian in 1246 for nineteen Pisan lire from a layman in Florence for the use of friars in the convent of Florence. The transaction was realised by the papal procurator of Franciscans.43 In 1319, the guardian of the same convent, Monaldo, bought a book containing parts of the Metaphysics, Ethics, Politics and Economics of Aristotle for the armarium of the convent for three Florentine lire.44 These examples can be multiplied easily, as many Franciscan manuscripts bear such purchase records. The students who were sent to a studium generale also purchased books regularly. They were given money by the convents to provide themselves with the necessary books.45

The purchase of books was regulated by the constitutions of the order. Although it was a considerable expenditure that was not easily reconciled with the mendicancy of friars, the purchase of books for common use was nevertheless tolerated by the spiritual wing of the order. However, the purchase of books by individual friars and books reserved for private use infuriated those friars who wanted to observe strictly the rule and the primitive Franciscan ideals.46 Spirituals like Ubertino di Casale claimed that the reason why so many friars bought books was not the pursuit of knowledge, because even those who were not engaged in studying were collecting books. According to Ubertino, friars were buying books not with the intention of studying, but as a financial investment:

Very expensive and unnecessary books acquired through various ways multiply in the Order. There is a great deal of appropriation of books; that is, only a few would share the books with his brothers freely. Many have too many books, and many do not even know how to use them. Many make a treasure out of their books, saying “when I get sick, I will provide for myself by selling my books.” and they sell and

46. For the names of some of the friars who built up a substantial collection of books, see Roest, 225–8.
buy books within the Order or better outside of the Order, whenever they can. Many sell the books to their own brothers at a higher price than they bought, following the custom of merchants.47

Both the evidence gathered from the notes in the manuscripts, and the decrees made in the order’s constitutions, testify that Ubertino was actually right about what was going on in the order. For example, in order to stop the friars buying books out of material ambition rather than for intellectual purposes, the 1310 general chapter that met in Padua decreed that no friar was to be allowed to have the duplicate of a book, and no friar could have a book that he could not use.48 As books were the only item of material value that friars were allowed to purchase, it became the main commodity for the financial transactions of friars. The constitutional regulations prove that books were used to pay debts and that they were mortgaged for monetary allowances. In 1285, the provincial chapter of Aquitaine decreed that custodians and guardians had to compel friars, who were in debt to other friars and to secular people, to pay their debts. If the friars did not pay, then their books and other things were to be taken away and sold within the order, so that the debt could be paid and great scandals avoided.49 Similarly, the thirteenth-century provincial constitutions of Provence decreed that if a friar who was in debt to his convent was transferred to another convent, then the guardian or vicar of the original convent was to keep the friar’s books as a pledge to his creditors. Eventually, the friar would be deprived of his books and other things in return for his accumulated debts.50 In the provincial constitutions of the province of Saint Anthony celebrated in Treviso in 1290, it was decreed that no friar was to sell, mortgage, or exchange any book without the special licence of the minister or the custodian, and with the approval of discreti of the convent.51


The trade in books between the friars in the fourteenth century seems to be also quite commonplace. In a manuscript in the Biblioteca Antoniana, which contains John of Erfurt’s and Bonaventura’s abbreviated commentary of the third Book of Sentences, I have found the following note written in a fourteenth-century hand: “Brother Hugo of Arquada has bought this book from brother Facino de Sancto Zaccharia of Montesilice for 6 solidos grosso.” Similarly, in 1397, Friar Giovanni da Todi purchased the *Expositiones* of Saint Jerome on the Bible from friar Gentile da Todi for one and a half florins. It is quite possible that both friars were in the same convent, that is, Saint Fortunato in Todi, where the manuscript is kept to this day.

For individual friars, convent libraries were a constant source for book acquisition. Apart from the books they were given freely for a limited period of time, friars purchased or rented books from convent libraries if they wanted to have the book for life or for a long period. In the case of renting, the friar would pay a pledge, that is, a certain amount of money, to the convent treasury, and would have the book he wanted until he died. After his death, the book would be taken back to the *armarium*. An example of such a transaction was recorded in one of the manuscripts in the Biblioteca Antoniana. The *Postilla Super Evangelia Dominicalia* of Bertrand de Turre was bought by Friar John de Plebe from the *armarium* of the convent of Padua for sixteen small lire in 1343. The transaction was made in the presence of the guardian and the vice-guardian of the convent. The fourteenth-century inventory of books in the Franciscan convent of Saint Fortunato of Todi informs us that a copy of the Apparatus of Innocent IV on Decretals was given to friar Vengnante under a pledge of four florins, and was to be taken back when the convent paid this sum. A book containing *Sermones festivi* was sold to friar Francesco di Burgonovo, and a *Liber Moralium* was sold to friar Giovanni di Roma. Apparently, there was also trade in books between the convent libraries, as the Inventory of Saint Fortunato of Todi records that a bible was sold to the convent of Aquasparta.

57. “Venditus est fratri Johanni de Roma:” Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, MS. 185, fol. 9r. Menestò, 201.
58. “Vendidit conventus loco aquasparte:” Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, MS 185, fol. 1v. Menestò, 199.
Sale of books within the order was an awkward thing when one remembers the original Franciscan creed. More awkward still, however, was a friar’s purchase of expensive and deluxe editions. Certainly, buying an expensive, nicely illuminated copy when a cheaper version was available was not only against the rule, but also against the theory of *usus pauper* (that the friars should use the cheapest and poorest of all things), approved pontifically in 1279. Indeed, the order tried to take precautions as early as 1239 against the acquisition of expensive books. In the constitutions of Rome, it was decreed that no Bible was to be bought that was more expensive than twenty lire of Tours.\(^5\) While the guardians, buying for the *armarium* of the convents, probably obeyed the rule, individual friars buying books for their own use did not always do so. For example, the famous inquisitor and historian, Paul of Venice, also a lector of the order, was reprimanded by the guardian of his convent for buying expensive parchment to write his books, and for purchasing and ordering lots of books to be written from the money he made as an inquisitor.\(^6\)

At the institutional level, the guardians enjoyed great control over the acquisition and sale of books. That opened the way to abuses, which the general and provincial chapters relentlessly tried to prevent. The provincial chapter of Aquitaine in the late thirteenth century declared that no custodian or guardian could sell, exchange, mortgage, or accept books and other valuable things into the convent without necessity, and without the consent of his convent.\(^6\) Similarly, the provincial chapter of upper Germany in 1303 prohibited the guardians from selling their own books or the books of the convent either in the convent, in the city, or outside the town walls.\(^6\)

Frequently, when a book was not readily available in the market, Franciscans paid the professional scribes for the writing of a book. This method was employed both by individual friars who paid from their private alms, and by the convent administrators. A manuscript, now in Fribourg, carries a note from the provincial minister of Strasbourg saying that he had this book written by a scribe called Gregorius in 1384.\(^6\) In some provinces the employment of non-Franciscan scribes was even institutionalised to provide a continuous expansion of the convent libraries. In the late thirteenth century, the province of the Marches of Treviso made a decree that in the convents of Padua and

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\(^{6}\) “Vidi insuper quod emebat pelles nimis delicatas de agnello existens Inquisitor. Unde scolares videntes dicebant me audiente quod non erant ille pelles secundum ordinis paupertatem, ea quod ita pulchre non invenirentur Venetis . . . Libros insuper multiplicavit scribi faciendo et emendo et satis est credibile quod de bonis officii:” A. Ghinato, “Fra Paolino da Venezia O. F. M., Vescovo di Pozzuoli (d. 1344),” *La Venezia Francescane* 93 (1949–50): 93.


Venice, and in other convents wherever it was possible, a scribe was to be kept, who would write books necessary and useful for the armarium.  

However, the practice of a friar employing professional scribes to copy a book he himself had written — especially in places of intense book circulation like Paris or Oxford — was discouraged by the constitutions. The main reason was that the scribes sometimes would make a copy for themselves without telling the author or the owner of the book. This problem of handing over the manuscripts to secular scribes arose in 1254, when a Franciscan student, Gerardo di San Donino, went public with his work, Introduction to the Evangelical Gospel, which was later condemned as heretical. The secular scribes of Paris, however, continued to publish the book through the copies they had acquired for themselves. The situation was described vividly by Jean de Meun in his Roman de la Rose where it was said that “anyone in Paris who wished, could find a copy of the Eternal Gospel on the parvis in front of Notre Dame and arrange a copy to be written.”

Following this unfortunate event, the Franciscan general chapter of 1260, summoned under the Minister General Bonaventura, declared that no one was to hand a copy of new writing to a scribe outside of the order, unless it had been examined carefully by the general and provincial minister. One friar who suffered from this situation was the famous Roger Bacon. At the beginning of his Opus tertium, he tried to excuse himself to the pope for the delay in sending his works. He claimed that only secular scribes could copy his books adequately, but then they would have made copies for themselves and for other people without his consent, as often writings multiplied in Paris through the deceitful behaviour of scribes.

Writing and Copying

The last and presumably the least common way of obtaining books was through writing and copying by the friars themselves. In an interesting article, Guglielmo Cavallo wrote about how the monasteries of Europe in the early Middle Ages, famous for their scriptoria and their centrality in book production, were replaced in time by the convents of the mendicant friars who, rather than copying books, were mainly engaged in the collection and preservation of books for studying. Although, as Cavallo suggested, the friars did not have a scriptorium in their convents, they nevertheless did still copy

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64. “Item ordinat minister et diffinitores cum provinciali capitulo, quod in conventu Padue et Venecis et aliis conventibus, qui sustinere poterunt, teneatur continue unus scriptor, qui scribat libros necessarios et pro armario opportunos:” “Statuta Provincialia Provinciae Franciae et Marchiae Tervisinae,” 460.


books and maintain professional scribes, though admittedly never on a great scale. The great majority of the friars’ books came through donations, wills, and buying rather than copying.

In the constitutions of 1239, there was an item asking the convent prelates to compel all friars to write.69 The same item was repeated later in the Narbonne constitutions of 1260.70 The famous Franciscan chronicler, Salimbene of Adam, for example, mentions that he was copying Joachim of Fiore’s Expositio Super Quattuor Evangelistas for minister general John of Parma.71 Besides, some friars were scribes by profession, like Bartholomeo Guiscolo who worked as an illuminator and scribe in Parma and France, respectively, in 1246 and 1248.72

Lectors and masters played an important role in the multiplication of books. As the experienced lectors and magisters in theology were those most heavily engaged in producing books such as Bible commentaries or theological treatises, they were assigned a socius, a younger friar who had spent a number of years in the schools and who possessed a decent knowledge of Latin grammar. It would usually be this socius who actually wrote the book down as it was dictated by the lector or magister. The 1294 provincial chapter of the Marches of Treviso asked lectors to finish the books they had started. Those who did not were to be deprived of their socius, and their exemption from attending the divine office was to be withdrawn.73 The theological training of the lectors would also give them authority in the multiplication of controversial theological books. In the 1282 general chapter, it was ordered that provincial ministers should see that the Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas was not to be multiplied except under the supervision of the lectors who understood the text.74

Students, particularly those attending the lectures in the studium generale, would also write books frequently in the form of lecture notes or compilations. There are many extant examples of these in the modern libraries. One such manuscript has survived from the year 1387, which a certain brother Bartholomeo di Mantua had written when he was a student in Piacenza.75

70. “Statuta Generalia Ordinis,” 69.
71. Salimbene de Adam, Cronica, ed. O. Holder-Egger, in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, 32 (Hanover, 1888), 294.
75. Bouveret, Colophons, 1, 225, No. 1803.
Although evidence for the copying of books in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is scarce, for the fifteenth century, as a result of a renewed practice of composing colophons, Franciscan scribes left written names frequently on the manuscripts.\textsuperscript{76} For the period of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries I have been able to find the names of ninety Franciscan friars who were engaged in copying books for themselves or for a superior.\textsuperscript{77}

In some exceptional cases, Franciscans acquired books through papal initiative. For example, in 1239 Pope Gregory IX sent an edict to the archbishops of France, England, Aragon, Navarre, Castille, and Portugal asking them to seize the books of Jews and Jewish books in the hands of clerics and lay people and place them in the convents of Franciscans and Dominicans.\textsuperscript{78} Although the edict seems to have been directed rather towards the religious books of Jews, no doubt any other books of scholarly value were also captured.

Another similar occasion of papal assistance took place in 1249, when Pope Innocent IV asked the monks of S. Maria de Capitolio to hand over the monastery to Franciscans, together with the books inside.\textsuperscript{79} This must not have been a joyful event for the monks, and some monks apparently resented such pre-emptory behaviour of the popes. In 1256, Pope Alexander IV asked the Benedictines to give the Church of S. Maria Maggiore in Tiburtina, Rome, to the Franciscans.\textsuperscript{80} However, the Benedictine monks took away books and ornaments of the church, which the pope, in an edict in 1258, asked them to return to the friars within fifteen days under the threat of excommunication.\textsuperscript{81}

**Conclusions**

What is striking in the picture described above is first of all that, contrary to general belief, medieval Franciscans not only collected and preserved books communally but also often individually. This was realised through the alms given to them and through the donors. Although constitutionally friars did not have the dominium of these books, they nevertheless sold, exchanged, or mortgaged them. Hence, the border between use and ownership practically disappeared in the handling of books. The permission of this private use led to the practices like renting a book from the convent library for life, which obviously prevented poorer friars from having access to books.

A second characteristic of Franciscan book acquisition seems to have been the great eagerness accompanying it. Many Franciscan friars were devoted to


\textsuperscript{77} In relation to a study on the Franciscan colophons, I have gone through all six volumes of Bouveret’s work on colophons and noted down the names of the Franciscan scribes. The results of this study will be published soon.

\textsuperscript{78} Bullarium Franciscanum, Romanorum Pontificum, Constitutiones, Epistolae ac Diplomata continens Tribus Ordinis S. P. N. Francisci spectantia, ed. H. Sbaralea, 1 (Rome, 1759–1768), 268–9, No. 94–5.

\textsuperscript{79} Bullarium Franciscanum, 1, 530–1, No. 304.

\textsuperscript{80} Bullarium Franciscanum, 2, 129, No. 184.

\textsuperscript{81} Bullarium Franciscanum, 2, 315, No. 459.
the study and teaching of theology, and consequently sought and collected books. However, there is enough evidence to think that some friars collected books as a means of financial investment. The statutes of the order were directed at preventing the abuses that arose from this eagerness. Nevertheless, the trade in books among the friars or with laymen in the cities, which exhibited friars as merchants to the outside world, was clearly conceived by the Spirituals as a violation of the Franciscan way of life and of the essential ideals of poverty, peace, and humility. It seems to be the prevalence of these abuses and violations that embittered the Spiritual Franciscans like Angelo Clareno and Ubertino Casale. Their dissent was formed around these, rather than around a wholesale rejection of intellectual activities or book acquisition.