

to those who are developing any type of online library programming.
—John Reppinger, Willamette University.

Mirjam M. Foot. *The Henry Davis Gift: A Collection of Bookbindings. Volume III: A Catalogue of South-European Bindings.* London and New Castle, Del.: The British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2010. 527p. \$125 ISBN: 9780712350549 (British Library) and 9781584562726 (Oak Knoll). LC80510312.

It is good to see volume three of Mirjam Foot's excellent contribution to the history of bookbindings. With it, one of our foremost scholars in the field brings to a conclusion a project that began more than thirty years ago. When Henry Davis deeded his spectacular collection of bindings to the then-British Museum in 1968, the latter acquired an extraordinary array of specimens from the 12th through the mid-20th century. In 1978, Foot, who served for many years as Director of Collections and Preservation in the British Library, brought out volume I of her planned three-volume set. It was titled *Studies in the History of Bookbinding*, and it consisted of a remarkable series of short pieces on individual bindings, binders, and patrons in the collection. For it, Foot chose "those bindings which have not previously been the object of detailed study or about which new facts can be told." With volume II in 1983, Foot brought out the first installment of her catalogue proper of the collection, and it immediately became a standard reference work in the field. As *A Catalogue of North-European Bindings*, volume II comprised short descriptive entries organized by country and accompanied by full-page illustrations of most of the bindings.

Volume III takes, for its turf, bindings in the Davis gift from France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Switzerland (with a few outliers from exotic spots like New York and Mexico). While the general

format conforms to that of volume II, individual entries are more generous, with the author paying much more attention to structural and decorative features. For practitioners as well as scholars, Foot's careful descriptions of binding structures will be enormously useful. Indeed, if you compare the individual entries in volume III with those found in the online British Library Database of Bookbindings, you will immediately appreciate the value of the printed text. While the database has many winning features and is a breeze to use, it does not carry over the rich textual descriptions that Foot prepared for the present volume. (Perhaps they will be added at some point in the future.) Each entry contains discrete sections on provenance, references, and literature, supplemented as appropriate with separate notes on tools, decorations, and relationships to other described bindings. The only regret I have about this volume (as well as about the first two) is that illustrations are not in color. I am sure that there are good reasons for that choice, but it would have been better had even a selection been reproduced in color. Happily, to get the color versions, you can go conveniently to the BL Database of Bookbindings.

The Davis collection gathers together choice bindings from the high end of the trade, and Foot makes clear in her introduction that one should not draw sweeping conclusions from them. That said, there is a wealth of information to assimilate here, and it will take years for scholars and curators to absorb the richness of Foot's commanding work. Few have done more than Foot over her distinguished career to make the case for the importance of the history of bookbinding to bibliography and the history of the book in general. As the capstone of her Davis project, the present volume will remain an essential and enduring reference tool.—Michael Ryan, Columbia University.