Goinga actually pushed ahead on a large scale and also whether the period of French rule may not have been a delaying factor in these developments or perhaps may have acted as a break. The abolition of the guilds and the general malaise of the years 1810-1813 among other things, made it necessary for the book trade to recover itself organization-wise after 1813. The question whether the changes in the book distribution, as they originated in the eighteenth century, managed to push ahead afterwards, would carry us beyond the scope of this book. Nevertheless, it is an important question to raise in order to be able to assess the viability of the changes that have been recorded. Did these changes stop at the level of ‘initiatives’ or were they actively adopted and incorporated? Obviously Van Goinga’s studies need a follow-up. It goes without saying that this research should be carried out with the same accuracy, thoroughness and open-mindedness as practised by Van Goinga.

BERRY DONGELMANS

ANTHONY HOBSON, Renaissance book collecting: Jean Grolier and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, their books and their bindings. Cambridge 1999, 30 x 22 cm, xx, 275 pp., illus., ISBN 0 521-651298 (hardback), £ 75.

For many years the name of Anthony Hobson, usually related to the collecting of books and bindings from the Renaissance, has guaranteed a high standard. When someone of his calibre has a new book published in his own area of research, expectations are high. And indeed, I was far from disappointed when reading his Renaissance book collecting. His highly erudite book on two Renaissance bibliophiles and the style of binding in Venice in the first half of the sixteenth century that can be related to them – an elaborated version of a Lyell lecture held in Oxford in 1991 – is so well written that I read it in one breath. As indicated by the title it deals in the first instance with Jean Grolier (c.1489-1565) and Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1503/4-75) and, in the second instance with bookbinding in Venice in the above-mentioned period. In the entire history of bookbinding no other collector of beautifully bound books can be named to whom more attention has been devoted than to Grolier, while Don Diego was only paid attention to in his country of origin, Spain. Nevertheless, Hobson manages to present a new picture of the famous, highly praised collector whose figure practically towers above any other collector. It is a more modest picture and at the same time a portrayal of a person of flesh and blood. The penetrating picture of Mendoza outlined by Hobson is new to me – I did not read the study on him by Angel González Palencia and Eugenio Mele, Vida y obras de Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, published in Madrid in 1941, while Hobson’s 1993 lecture ‘The library of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza’ was not published until after his book in Actes et communications [du] xviiie congrès, Madrid, 1993 [de l’] Association Internationale de Bibliophiles; Transactions [of the] xvnith congress [ . . . ] (Madrid 2001), pp. 38-51.

There are striking similarities between the two bibliophiles. Both of them held high public functions and the careers of both were interrupted by a fall from grace and imprisonment; both men collected books, coins and antiques and both commissioned medallion bindings. But the differences are characteristic. Grolier came from a wealthy
family of merchants which at the time was engaged in transforming themselves into the lower nobility and Mendoza came from the largest, wealthiest and most powerful family in Castile. The scene of Grolier’s early activities was Italy, that of his later exploits was France where he served as ‘trésorier de la France’. The role he played in the Renaissance – Hobson does not hesitate to demythologize him – was limited and much less significant than was previously thought. His literary culture was based on Latin studies which were obsolete at the time. He did not play any part in the development of the Greek studies of his day. But he was an important mediator between French and Italian humanism. He was closely involved with the Aldine press and ordered editions of the Latin classics printed by Aldus, often in several copies. His books were beautifully bound – in fact his bindings rank among the finest specimens of the art of European bookbinding, while they contributed to a large extent to the development of the type of binding with interlacings and morses, a style that exerted its influence throughout Europe. But his bindings, which nowadays can be found scattered all over the world, served just as much a purpose as they formed a purpose in themselves. Italy was also the scene of part of Mendoza’s career, not a diplomatic career, but a military one. Endowed with a less pleasing character than Grolier, he was a greater scholar and reader and a much more prominent collector. His library was important in areas which were of considerably less interest to the French treasurer: philosophy, exact sciences, medicine and vernacular literature. He was not rich, but he managed to assemble a significant collection the greater part of which is still in the Escorial. His bindings however were less outstanding. Don Diego was not devoid of bibliophile instincts, but Grolier was a greater bibliophile.

After presenting this brief comparison of the two collectors, which is largely derived from Renaissance book collecting, an in-depth review of this work is unnecessary. I would rather advise anyone who is interested in bookbinding and book-collecting in the relevant period to read the book for himself or herself. This will be a more than rewarding experience, also for the reader who wishes to know what the study of bookbinding may entail. I will however give an outline of the contents. Following the preface, acknowledgements and a list of frequently used abbreviations, there are the chapters devoted to Grolier, his early years, his (second) Italian period 1515-21 and the (final) period in France. One large chapter is devoted to Mendoza, which is followed by a chapter on the Venetian bookbinding in, roughly, the first half of the sixteenth century. This is a subject about which all sorts of things have been written in the past. Here they are set right. For instance, the myths surrounding the so-called Aldine bindings are cleared up. This is followed by a catalogue, arranged in alphabetical order according to author’s name, of the printed works in Mendoza’s collection as existing in the Escorial; unfortunately a considerable portion was rebound at some time. Furthermore, the catalogue is made accessible by indexes to printers, publishers and editors, commentators and translators. As a first appendix a long-awaited list of Grolier’s bindings has been included, arranged according to the bindery where they were made. It is not only based on the views of the former expert Howard Nixon but also on recent studies of the binders who worked for Grolier. Further appendices include an address by Grolier to François I, the Venetian catalogue of Mendoza’s Greek manuscripts, the now known bindings by the so-called Mendoza binder, the Cicero binder, the Fugger binder, the bindings by Anthoni Lodewijk or Antoni Flander, the bindings by the Agnese binder and the emblematic binder. It