



The William Kent Library, Holkham

‘FROM COLLEGE LIBRARY TO COUNTRY HOUSE’

7 – 11 September 2026

‘From College Library to Country House’ is conceived from the perspective of the British aristocracy and gentry whose education centred upon preparing them to run their country estate, including the house and collections, and argues for the importance of the library and the book collection in this process.

Too often in country house studies the architecture, interior design and art collections have held sway and this Course aims to foreground the College book collections at the disposal of tutors and the subsequent development of the country house library. Libraries reveal not only the intellectual or recreational interests of past generations, but also how books manifest taste, fashion, and opportunities for display. Book historians and tutors well known in their respective fields will conduct the Course and will consider a broad variety of subjects including book binding, the development of the idea of rare books and of book collections, library portraiture and questions of spatial analysis and mobility, all in the context of the collections housed in some of the oldest and most complete book rooms in Britain.

This intensive residential five-day Course is based in the exceptional surroundings of St Catharine’s College, a constituent college of the University of Cambridge. Directed by Dr Andrew Moore, the programme plans to visit a series of iconic libraries. These include the historic private library of Houghton Hall created by Robert Walpole, and Holkham Hall, home to one of the greatest private manuscript and printed book



collections in Britain, housed today in three of the country's most important country house library rooms.

The Course also visits the library designed by James Gibbs for Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford at Wimpole Hall in Cambridgeshire, and the Braybrooke library rooms at Audley End, of considerable interest for being reconstituted from dressing rooms into the 3rd Lord Braybrooke's library, incorporating the inherited Neville family books. The library at Audley End functioned as an informal family sitting room, with the adjacent study (the South Library) still displayed as it looked in the early nineteenth century.

The Course includes the Old Libraries of St John's College and Queens' College; the Wren Library, Trinity; the Parker Library at Corpus Christi; the Founder's Library at the Fitzwilliam Museum. Additional seminars will take place in the context of the historic book collections in the Cambridge University Library designed by Giles Gilbert Scott (1880-1960).

Further details, including the cost of this short Course, will be advertised on The Attingham Trust website (www.atinghamtrust.org) from October 2025.