

## BOOK REVIEW

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### Review of: *Catalog of the Robert L. Sadoff Library of Forensic Psychiatry and Legal Medicine*

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**REFERENCE:** McKenzie, J. *Catalog of the Robert L. Sadoff library of forensic psychiatry and legal medicine*. Mormon ET, editor. Science History Publications/USA, Sagamore Beach, MA, 2004, 178 pp.

The *Catalog of the Robert L. Sadoff Library of Forensic Psychiatry and Legal Medicine* is a comprehensive and unique compilation describing historical forensic psychiatric and legal medicine texts from the renowned collector and leader in the field of forensic psychiatry, Dr. Robert Sadoff. He has recently donated a large part of his collection to the College of Physicians in Philadelphia, and has added to their already massive collection of historical texts. This collection is almost certainly the largest and most comprehensive collection of forensic psychiatric texts in the world. While these materials have all been entered into the library's web-based catalog ([www.cppsourc.info](http://www.cppsourc.info)), the published book is an easy reference and allows for the casual researcher to browse through the collection and appreciate what has been written on these topics over the past 300 years.

Sadoff's collection, and the cataloguing of such by the College of Physicians, is a literary history of forensic psychiatry, legal medicine, and the history of deviant and socially unacceptable behavior from the 1700's to the present. It is a guide not only for historians and collectors, but also for forensic psychiatrists who are interested in understanding the progression of thought in their field. Even much of the lay public would find it fascinating.

This catalog is intriguing and educational. Many of the authors are famous in the field (Benjamin Rush and Philippe Pinel, for example), but the majority is less well known. In any field, it is important to recognize what has been written and to be able to trace the history of that field's development. This is especially true in psychiatry and forensic psychiatry, where laws and social policy greatly impact upon the practice of the profession. In this collection, one can glean an introductory understanding of this development by the titles of the works alone. For example, William Bradford's 1793 work, entitled "Enquiry into how far the punishment of death is necessary in Pennsylvania" and Mary Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the rights of woman: with strictures on political and moral subjects" (1794) indicate that topics such as capital punish-

ment and women's rights have been debated for centuries in this country.

The texts are catalogued by century, with an impressive collection of over 50 works from the 18th century. The published catalog provides a concise, yet complete, alphabetical listing of the works, with standard citations and a brief description of the quality of the text beneath. Almost 20% of the citations from the 18th century were not found in the rare book catalog of The New York Academy of Medicine, indicating that Sadoff's collection does indeed contain some rare work. Ms. Miriam Mandelbaum, the Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts at The New York Academy of Medicine, noted, "it is a truly wonderful collection."

In addition to books, Sadoff has also compiled an impressive collection of pamphlets, manuscripts and offprints, some of the illustrations of which can be found interspersed throughout the catalog. According to the note from John Gach (antiquarian bookseller specializing in psychiatry and psychology) offered as an introduction, Sadoff was known in the bookseller community for his avid collection habits and his discerning eye. The comprehensive nature of this catalog urges the reader to appreciate the over forty years of collecting done by Dr. Sadoff.

This outstanding catalog could be enhanced by the addition of a subject index. Obviously an immense amount of time and effort would be required to produce such an index. This catalog is intended for an educated audience who may not absolutely need such a guide, but it would be helpful for researchers and librarians to be able to quickly locate, for example, all of the works in this collection from the 19th century related to the insanity defense. Ms. Mandelbaum pointed out that the collation for many of the books (information about how the book was made) was incomplete; this information would be valuable for serious collectors and librarians to have in order to compare their own works to those of Dr. Sadoff.

Dr. Sadoff's gift demonstrates the need and the utmost importance of preserving a collection such as this. The respected and able librarians from the College of Physicians can be thanked for accepting this essential task. The published bibliography is a means of exploring this vast collection without immediately needing to travel to Philadelphia. However, having perused the catalog, it does encourage the curious to witness first-hand such works as

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“Extraordinary popular delusions and the madness of crowds” by Charles McKay (1932) and “On idiocy and imbecility,” by William Ireland (1877).

This catalog is an invaluable guide to the world of forensic psychiatry and legal medicine as recorded in literary history. It is thorough, eminently readable, and even entertaining. Dr. Sadoff

has clearly amassed a phenomenal set of works that will enrich the College of Physician’s already extensive collection. He notes in his introduction that he has accumulated over 7000 volumes and donated over 4000 of them to the College. Everyone who reads this catalog will be looking forward to the unveiling of the rest of his collection at some point in the future.