



## Norfolk Heritage Centre Special Collections **Norwich City Library**



**Norwich City Library** dates from 1608, and was the first library to be established by a local authority in England outside London. The library was housed in converted rooms at St Andrews Hall, which served as the overnight lodgings for clergy travelling to the city to preach at the Cathedral. To compose an effective sermon access to books was considered crucial.

No catalogue appears to have been made during the first fifty years of the library's existence and no large donation of books was received. All this changed in 1656 when eight clergymen met together in the library room at St. Andrew's Hall to subscribe to a set of new rules drawn up by the City Assembly for admission to the library.

One of their first acts was to appoint a librarian and an 'underkeeper' or deputy. At the same time each member present pledged to pay twelve pence quarterly to the underkeeper as a membership fee. It was not long before the members were purchasing new stock from money donated by wealthy members of the city administration like Joseph Paine. A manuscript catalogue was drawn up and a donation book was purchased in which were recorded the names of all those who had given books to the library since its foundation in 1608.

By the end of the nineteenth century the library contained over 2,000 volumes, recorded in a printed catalogue by Frederic Kitton, *Catalogue librorum in Bibliotheca Norvicensi* (1883). It survived the 1994 fire almost unscathed and is now part of the stock of the Norfolk Heritage Centre.

More information can be found in *Norwich City Library 1608-1737* by Clive Wilkins-Jones.

**Most of the collection is on the library catalogue, and many items are available to view by request in the Norfolk Heritage Centre search room. Please ask staff for more details.**

