

# Household Books Project: A Guide to Decoding and Interpreting a Bibliographic Entry

The Household Book Project, a creation of Professor Lynette Hunter, digitizes and makes available on-line leading bibliographies of household material from 1475–1914: household medicine and technology, care of the sick, elderly, and children, etiquette and behavior, treatment of servants, the preservation, conservation, preparation, consumption and management of food.

- The first two volumes by Dena Attar (1800–1914) and Elizabeth Driver (1875–1914) are automatically selected for access.
- To search one volume or the other individually, select the name button at the top right. Selected volume is indicated by dark blue color.
- Use the indices on the left-hand side of the website to browse entries by author, short-title, category, or chronological order.
- Additionally, use the Advanced Search feature to explore by additional variables such as price, dimension, entry notes, and many other bibliographic aspects.
- To browse by country-specific libraries or publishing company, use the “Derived Indices” section at the bottom left side.

Below you will find an example that will better explain how to access and interpret a typical bibliographic entry.

**title**  
100 cheap dishes

**author**  
By MATHEW, Mrs Emily de Vere

reference to book in this bibliographic context, ie. this database

locations and names of publishers  
747.1 100 cheap dishes | each of which can be made for | less than one shilling. | By the author of | "Supper Dishes for People with Small Means," | "Cheap Dinner Dishes," | etc., etc. | [Price sixpence.] Ipswich: Pawsey and Hayes; London: Simpkin and Marshall; [nd]

size of book  
16.5 x 10.0 cm

description of front cover  
Blue paper

country where the book is located  
GB

libraries within that country that include the book  
[LB destroyed \*LoEN OB]

this indicates the author has written and is known by other works

Description on front cover of physical book. Line breaks noted by |

price  
d=pence, s=shillings

"No date" of publication printed in the book  
[nd]

Advertisement inside the book  
The author is not named. The text contains 101 numbered recipes, not 100 as stated in the title. LB, LoEN and OB date the book [1891].

Page numbers. Roman numerals represent pages that come before 1 in the book. Numbers in brackets represent unnumbered pages.

Additional information

## Helpful Facts:

**EDITION:** The edition is helpful because it indicates how many times the book was reprinted, assessed and changed. It's a guide to how popular the book is, and an indication of the audience/readership having an effect on the contents of the book.

**AUTHOR:** The fact that the author is not named but has written and known by other books indicates that the publishers have a good idea that this will sell well. It also possibly signifies that the author is a man. This kind of book, aimed at housekeepers, could gain more credibility if the reader thought a woman wrote it.

**PRICE:** For conversion go to: <http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/numimage/Currency.htm>

6d = .5 of a shilling, there are 20 shillings in a pound so 6d = .025 pounds = \$2.96

What you need to remember is that people did not earn proportionally as much. This means they had less money for non-essential items, so even though this book seems relatively cheap by our standards, it represents a significant expenditure in this time period. However, what the conversion shows is that it would be in the area of upper working class (artisan) and middle class purchase power -- which the title implies.

**SIZE:** This is a small book, about 6.25" x 4", so it is meant to be easy to handle, you could put it in your pocket.

**DECORATION:** The 'blue paper' wrapper was put on by the publisher, and often removed by the purchaser. These wrappers protected the book, and were often printed with information about the book and/or the publisher while the hardcover of the book itself would be plain, or simply have a title on the spine (if anything), because hardcovers were expensive to emboss or print on. Also, the blue paper wrapper indicates that the publisher thought it should be marketed as a book that would remain in a household for an extended period of time. This makes it likely that the people buying it, even though it is so cheap, would view it as a longer-term investment. The fact that this particular copy still has the wrapper on it implies either that the reader/owner looked after it because it was of value, or that they didn't use it.

**ENTRY NOTES:** It's important to pay attention to entry notes concerning specific aspects of a text, such as pagination details, introductory notes, forewords, etc. For instance, a long unpaginated introduction, even without seeing the copy, would probably have been advice, with the recipes starting on the numbered pages.

## How to Utilize this Bibliographic Information:

- Try to find the book either on microfilm or digitized
- Figure out what kind of 'advice' was given in the introduction to get a sense of the social history, the attitude to gender roles, and family structure
- Seek info on social class, and on whether the wife had any 'assistance' in the form of a daily maid
- Look at the recipes to see what kinds of foodstuffs were used, and whether it was all fairly common, or whether the book included foods from around the world—do more research in this area if interested in diet, domestic medicine and lifestyle.
- If interested in technology, look at the cooking instructions to get a sense of whether the cook is supposed to be using gas, coal or electricity, and whether there are any kitchen 'devices' like pressure cookers or hay-boxes involved
- If a book is aimed towards a family, look at whether it's divided into breakfast, lunch and dinners – this would give a sense of whether the husband came home for lunch, and, if not, what the women and children ate at that meal. Or, if there are different recipes for children, what does this say about their status? This is around the time that meals for children began to improve. Earlier in the 19th century, children were often on horrible diets to 'control their appetites' These diets were directly related to sexuality, anger, and things today we'd classify as ADD, ADHD, or on the autistic range.
- Look to find out more about the book trade—what could a book like this indicate about the mass medium of print that had taken off in this time period? What can this say about reading, writing and education?
- Look at the historical events that occurred around the time period of publishing. For instance, concerning a book published in 1891, it's significant to know The Education acts in the UK were implemented in the 1860s. So, all children between 6 and 12 were supposed to go to school. This means that by the 1890s most people could read and write, and there was a growing appetite for reading, especially among women at home.