Lecture 13: learned reading

Today, 6:30pm Lowell House JCR (across from the dining hall) I am giving an informal talk on some of my research on “Coping with information overload in early modern Europe.” All are welcome!

I. Traces of reading are mostly traces left by learned readers:
- women, children and workers as “dangerous” readers: requiring extra guidance and restrictions, generating anxiety; educated male readers provoke less anxiety
- kinds of marks: marks of ownership (ex-libris); marks of inattention (doodles); marks of attention: corrections, cross-references, doxographical rally (who is cited and how), marginal summaries or keywords (often gathered in a personal index), or symbols, little diagrams; personal judgments, references to personal experience

II. Methods of note-taking
- Adversaria and commonplacing (rhetorical and philosophical)—image of the bee making honey from multiple flowers; fragmenting tendency
- Note-taking manuals in 17th: “to aid the memory” (to reinforce it or to relieve it?)
- For sharing with others; relying on notes taken by others

III. Uses of reading:
- kinds of reading in Ren Italy (from Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance*): meditative (e.g. religious), doctrinal (to learn things), scholastic (to argue from texts), imitative (rhetorical), allegorical (moralizing), critical (philological), aesthetic (rare before 18th)
- circumstances of reading: when and where? “office furniture”

Conclusions: hard to generalize, much variation in personal habits. Methods of note-taking fueling a tendency toward “snippeting,” appropriating (e.g. re-using without regard to original context), compiling and copiousness.

For further reading:
- Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions* (2000)
- William H Sherman, *John Dee: Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Ren*