

252 KING, WILLIAM

Librarian & Bookseller

Alexandria

Librarian and bookseller in Alexandria (1817-22) as successor to Conrad A. Shutz (384).

King is an enigmatic presence in the Virginia print trade. His common name makes tracing his personal life in the public record difficult, while only a handful of advertisements that record his trade activities survive. King acquired the commercial "circulating Library" of Conrad A. Shutz in Alexandria following Shutz's death in August 1817; he conducted that library until his own death in September 1822. Shutz started the library in 1802 after this particular business model – one either loaning or selling books, according to his patrons' preferences – was abandoned by the town's larger booksellers. King continued the practice, although he was clearly more inclined to loan his books rather than sell them. So in his five-year proprietorship, he expanded the library's holdings to about 2000 volumes focusing on the latest novels and works of divinity, eschewing political and legal titles.

This operating model was still a viable one then, as the library quickly found new, unnamed proprietors a month after King's death. They added musical instruments and sheet music to their offerings, making them their principal sales focus while still lending books for a fee; those proprietors sold the concern intact six months later to one Sarah Harper, apparently an Alexandria widow, who expanded the musical side of the business; she sold the library in mid-1825 to a "Dr. Martin," who then moved it to a space within the bookstore of Andrew T. Kennedy (250); Kennedy evidently absorbed the library's holdings into his stocks in 1826.

Personal Data

Died: September 1822 Alexandria, Virginia

Wife Eliza survived him; no record of offspring yet discovered.

Sources: *Artisans & Merchants*; notices in *Alexandria Gazette* and *Alexandria Herald* (1801-26).