The Origins of Museums
The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe
Edited by Oliver Impey and Arthur Macgregor

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- A reprint of the original 1985 edition with updated photographs
- Thirty-three essays from scholarly contributors on the evolution of collecting, and how this lead to the formation of the modern museum
- One of the first books to explore how collectors live with their objects, a subject which has become increasingly studied and popular

History Today carried a feature in 2015, describing The Origin of Museums as "a cult book [that] spawned a new discipline in the history of collecting". Indeed, the first publication of this book in 1985 undoubtedly marked a propitious moment in the development of interest, in what has since grown to be a dynamic subject-area in its own right. That an appetite for such matters was already there is confirmed by the fact that the first impression sold out within a few months, a second impression a year or two later, and the third in 1989. There was to be no further printing by the original publishers, Oxford University Press. However in 2001 a new edition appeared with a new publisher. Demand again proved buoyant, but within a few months the company failed; having operated on a print-on-demand basis, it left behind it no unsold stock. The Origins of Museums reverted to a scarce (though much sought-after) volume. With original copies now selling for hundreds, if not thousands of pounds, the Ashmolean is proud to make this important volume readily available again.

The late Oliver Impey and Arthur Macgregor were both Assistant Keepers at the Ashmolean Museum, and both were involved with the Journal of the History of Collections.