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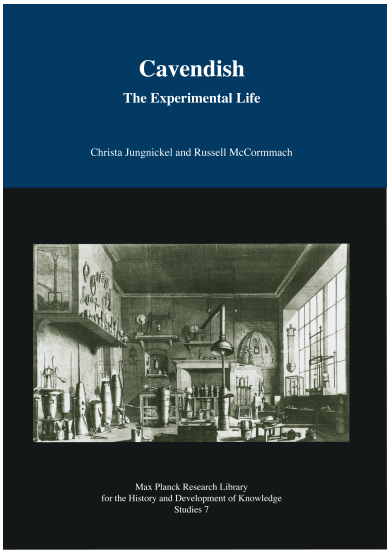
Christa Jungnickel and Russell McCormmach:

Preface and Acknowledgements



In: Christa Jungnickel and Russell McCormmach: *Cavendish : The Experimental Life (Second revised edition 2016)*
Online version at `http://edition-open-access.de/studies/7/`

ISBN 978-3-945561-06-5
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Printed and distributed by:
PRO BUSINESS digital printing Deutschland GmbH, Berlin
`http://www.book-on-demand.de/shop/14971`

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at `http://dnb.d-nb.de`

Cavendish

The Experimental Life

Revised Second Edition

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The Experimental Life

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Communicated by Jed Z. Buchwald

Editorial Team: Lindy Divarci, Georg Pflanz, Bendix Düker, Caroline Frank, Beatrice Hermann, Beatrice Hilke

Image Processing: Digitization Group of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science

Cover Image: Chemical Laboratory. This idealized laboratory with metallurgical furnaces is from William Lewis, *Commercium Philosophico-Technicum* (London, 1756). Courtesy of Smith Image Collection, Van Pelt Dietrich Library, University of Pennsylvania.

ISBN 978-3-945561-06-5
Original edition published in 1999 by Bucknell University Press.
Revised second edition first published in 2016 by Edition Open Access.
Max Planck Institute for the History of Science
http://www.edition-open-access.de
Printed and distributed by
PRO BUSINESS digital printing Deutschland GmbH, Berlin

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Scientific Board

for
Robert Deltete
and
Marvin Sparks

Nothing is more fantastic, ultimately, than precision.
– Robbe-Grillet on Kafka

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Fifteen years have passed since my wife Christa Jungnickel and I published *Cavendish, the Experimental Life*.[1] In the meantime, I have published two books about Cavendish. The first, *Speculative Truth,* is about Cavendish's work in theoretical physics.[2] He is known primarily as an experimentalist but he was no less accomplished as a theorist, and this book helps correct a partial view of his work. Cavendish exhibited some of the most baffling behaviors in the history of science, which are taken up in the second book, *The Personality of Henry Cavendish.*[3] We only touched on this subject in our biography, and to that extent it was incomplete.

Cavendish was a "great man with extraordinary singularities," his colleague Humphry Davy observed. The new edition of the biography brings a fuller understanding to what was "great" about Cavendish, and as well to what was "extraordinary" about his personality, and by clarifying the connections between the two, it more fully integrates his personality and his work. The new materials and perspectives complete the biography of Cavendish. As with any revision, this one also makes improvements of the usual kind: it corrects flaws in the original, sharpens discussions, introduces new materials, and improves the writing throughout.

We express our gratitude to persons who read part or all of the original book in manuscript and to others who in one form or another have given encouragement, advice, and help: Mark Bonthrone, William H. Brock, I. Bernard Cohen, Arthur L. Donovan, Mordechai Feingold, John Gascoigne, Charles C. Gillispie, Jan Golinski, Sean Goodlett, Peter Harman, Patrick Henry, Ingrid Hofmaster, Sean Kissane, Carmen Mayer-Robin, David Philip Miller, Betty Mohr, Joseph F. Mulligan, Rosemarie Ostler, Jean Luc Robin, Richard Sorrenson, and Mary Lou Sumberg. We have been aided in our study of Cavendish by many archivists. Here we give special thanks to the archivists in charge of the Devonshire Collection at Chatsworth, which contains Henry Cavendish's scientific manuscripts: Peter Day, Charles Nobel, Michael Pearman, Andrew Peppitt James Towe, and Thomas Wragg.

Russell McCormmach
March 25, 2015

[1] Jungnickel und McCormmach (1999).
[2] McCormmach (2004).
[3] McCormmach (2014).