Welcome to new readers

This spacious College Library is an important resource centre, primarily intended to provide undergraduate and graduate members of the college with the books needed for their courses.

We are happy to have you among our readers and will do all we can to help. For queries and book recalls, please ask any member of the staff at the front desk. Suggestions for new purchase in your field of interest will be seriously considered. Please use the book suggestions form, or contact Dr Cristina Neagu.

Admissions Policy

All current members of Christ Church may use the Library. Members of the college may not bring non-members into the Library without the express permission of the Librarian or the Assistant Librarians.

Upper Library Tours

New undergraduates and postgraduates are welcome to visit the Upper Library. Please find a member of staff on your first visit to the Library so that you can be given a quick tour. Please avoid Thursday and Friday of 0 week, Monday of 1st week and Friday of 8th week.

Exhibitions in the Upper Library

Christ Church Library offers numerous exhibitions of rare books and manuscripts from its vast and priceless collections. There may be as many as two or three a term, so keep an eye on the posters and introductory leaflets on display in the reading rooms and entrance hall. Inaugurating the series planned for this academic year is an exhibition of architectural drawings of the “New Library”. We promise many fine, exciting displays. The wealth of material we have in our care is stunning. To give you a taste of the range of possibilities, let us mention that during the past year, we organized exhibitions of books and manuscripts on Tudor England, The History of Dictionaries, Types of Prayer Books, King Charles & the English Civil War, and The History of Chemistry. Opening hours: 9am - 12pm; 2pm - 5pm. We look forward to your visits.

Cristina Neagu

Library Donation

The Library has recently received an exceptionally generous gift of $200,000 (£134,420.77), specifically for cataloguing our early printed books. This money will allow us to employ a full-time cataloguer for almost five years, enabling us to catalogue to modern standards over 10,000 titles. We are very grateful to the donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, and we are delighted that we will not only be able to complete the cataloguing of Archbishop Wake’s bequest, but also make significant progress in cataloguing the other important collections in the library.

Janet McMulin

What’s on – Exhibitions

The Finest Library : Architectural drawings

Atrij Peckwateriensis Latus Australe sive Bibliotheca, portfolio of Upper Library architectural drawings PL.7 [West Table b.1.5.f.7]
Update on OLIS

A year and a half ago Christ Church Library opted to integrate its holdings into the large and complex network of Oxford University college and departmental libraries. This translates into joining OLIS (Oxford Libraries Information System), the unified catalogue and library management platform.

OLIS contains records of over eight million books and periodicals. The system manages both bibliographic data (such as an item's author and title), and Oxford-specific holdings data (which particular OLIS libraries, for example, have a copy and whether these copies are currently on loan). Although the general user only sees the catalogue, behind the scenes library staff use it for ordering books and journals, recording loans and reservations, and registering journal issues.

OLIS is already available at Christ Church as part of OxLIP (Oxford Libraries Information Platform), an interface providing access to several hundred subscriptions to bibliographic, reference and full-text databases.

An increasing number of records belonging to the large early printed collections of Christ Church are gradually being added onto OLIS. The Library has been fortunate to benefit from a generous donation which has enabled us to employ Elizabeth Mathew, an expert antiquarian book cataloguer. Her progress on cataloguing the Wake collection is impressive.

During the past academic year the Library staff and a team of specialists from SERS (Systems and Electronic Resources Service) have worked very hard to process the data for the transfer from Heritage to OLIS. The complexity of the task, involving two very different systems, coupled with unforeseen difficulties, have delayed the moment when we can ‘go live’ with the new system.

The transfer poses many technical problems and is an unprecedented challenge in terms of computer programming and streaming of data. Once again the Library was very fortunate. We benefited from the enthusiasm, dedication and understanding of Geoff Neate (Database Applications & Projects Manager) who has coordinated the project.

The situation at present is as follows. All data have been migrated onto OLIS. The Cataloguing module is in test mode. Whereas all functions are operational and records have been transferred successfully, we have traced a number of problems regarding duplication. In addition, the way a number of these particular records are being displayed can occasionally be confusing to readers. These problems appear especially in the case of Christ Church volumes which cannot be matched to extant OLIS records. One of the reasons is that the format for bibliographic and authority data in Heritage is not MARC 21 compliant.

MARC 21 are standards for the representation and communication of bibliographic and related information in machine-readable form. They are maintained by the Library of Congress in consultation with various user communities. MARC 21 format for bibliographic data contains specifications for encoding data elements needed to describe, retrieve, and control various forms of bibliographic material. MARC 21 for authority data contains specifications for encoding data elements that identify or control the content (and content designation) of those portions of a bibliographic record (e.g. author, editor, illustrator) that may be subject to authority control.

The difficulties we encountered with the data migration processes point to the desirability of building a complete Christ Church bibliographic and holdings database on OLIS. Our contract with the University already stipulates the need to employ a cataloguer to upgrade the bibliographic data in holdings which could not be matched automatically to extant MARC 21 records on OLIS. The Library is currently finalising an agreement with one of the most respected cataloguers in Oxford to start this crucial process.

We will keep you in touch with developments as they unfold. In the meantime, we would like to convey our gratitude to the SERS team and Geoff Neate in particular for all their extraordinary hard work, skill, time, understanding and creativity in helping us.

Cristina Neagu

Brief guide to searching the catalogues & borrowing books

Christ Church Library catalogue

Christ Church Library holdings are currently on Heritage 4. This is an autonomous system separate from OLIS. It is a Windows-based interface, different from the DOS version in use until the beginning of September. To enter the catalogue click on the Heritage Enquiry icon on the desktop. Then follow carefully the instructions on screen. You can opt for both simple general searches or advanced, boolean-type of retrieval. You can also choose between a brief and a full format displays of holdings.

Borrowing books from Christ Church Library

To borrow books, please use the Self-Issue computer placed on the right-hand cupboard in the entrance hall and follow the instructions that the staff have prepared for you. In order to familiarize you with the procedure, here is a brief summary:

1. Scan the barcode of your University card
2. Scan the barcode inside the book
3. Clear your reader record using the Clear-screen button on the top left-hand corner.

Note: The University card needs to be scanned before each book you wish to borrow.

Passwords for all reading room computers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Username</th>
<th>Password</th>
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<td>newsearch</td>
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Summer Schools in the Library

During the summer, Christ Church is host to a number of conferences and summer schools, not least of which is the Oxford Experience, administered by the Department for Continuing Education. The Experience continues for five weeks, with a selection of courses available each week. Many guests stay for several weeks, and some have been returning year after year. At the beginning of each week the newly arrived guests have an orientation meeting in the Upper Library and, until recently, this was the only involvement that we had. A few years ago, though, browsing through the programme, and having been visited by one or two of the regular tutors on the course, the Library and Archive staff decided we could do more to make the Experience even better than it already was by providing visual aids to any course tutor who asked. The Library and the archive are both so rich in material from so many periods, and on so many subjects, there was barely a course offered for which we couldn’t provide something to add a bit of extra colour. Students studying architecture, furniture, history, literature, art, theatre, theology, could all be shown something special from our collections. In 2003, though, we decided to go one step further, and actually tutor a course ourselves. We began gently, co-opting other friends and experts to help. The course was entitled Christ Church Revisited, and aimed to show guests some of the great treasures of the college and cathedral, as well as to dispel some of those unhelpful myths and pre-conceptions that people have about Oxford colleges, especially one remembered for its Brideshead connection. On the first day, the class had a lightning trip through Christ Church’s history using documents in the archive as illustrations of continuity and change. Another morning was spent looking at the Library’s collections and treasures. Jacqueline Thalmann gave a tour of the Picture Gallery, both the usual visitor experience, but behind the scenes too, particularly looking at the then on-going work of a team of conservators treating Aldrich’s valuable collection of prints and engravings. Jim Godfrey spied the group (who were mainly Canadians and Americans, with a Dutch archivist) through more than 1000 years of cathedral history, explained how the cathedral works today, and how it fits with the college. On the final morning, one of the tutors explained to the class how a modern college works, and the Development Director brought everyone up to date explaining why fund-raising is so essential to maintain the quality of our beautiful buildings and the uniqueness of an Oxford education. The week seemed to have been a great success, buoyed on a wave of enthusiasm, we decided to have another go this summer focusing more closely on the archive and the library. This time the course was entitled Parchment to Paper: Christ Church’s Written Heritage. We had five students (two American, two Canadian, and one from Luxembourg), which doesn’t sound very many, but is perfect for allowing guests to actually handle documents and to see things at very close quarters. It also means that we do not need a special teaching room, but can hold the classes surrounded by the documents and books that they have come a long way to see. We had two days in the archive, again looking at the history of the site from earliest times through its rich documentary sources. It was a bit worrying when, at the end of day one, we still had not quite reached the foundation of Christ Church itself, but no-one seemed to mind. To see the excitement on the faces of north American students when they were permitted to handle a manuscript (the Eygham Cartulary) that was five centuries older than their country was worth missing chunks of modern history. Janet McMullin then had the students in the Library for two sessions, looking at the progression from manuscript to printed book, and at the collection as an artefact in itself. Going several points better than the archivist was able to, the students were shown, among many others, a Greek manuscript that is the best part of a millennium older than the United States. Looking through the early catalogues, one student found a book that appealed – on early cryptography – and asked if she could see it. This was some challenge; until the cataloguing of the early printed books is completed, anonymous books, as this one was, are terribly hard to find in the old ledger catalogues. The librarians have to be devious and lateral thinkers, but we rose to the challenge and produced the book with a flourish! The fifth session of the week was split between the Gallery, where the class looked at prints and engravings under Jacqueline’s expert tutelage, and the Library where Cristina Neagu introduced everyone to the beauties, techniques, and history of illumination. Both classes were also treated to a long behind-the-scenes visit to the Bodleian Library, much to the envy of many of their fellow students on other courses.

Taking these classes is hard work, particularly in the preparation, but it is more than worthwhile. Not only is there tremendous joy and satisfaction – and pride – in being able to show and to explain the fantastic written heritage that Christ Church has – from its most valuable rare books and manuscripts to the unique collection of administrative documents in the archive – but we learn so much ourselves in the process. Unfortunately, we will not be able to do such a course again for several years as we are preparing for major works in both Blue Boar, where the archive is kept, and the Library which is desperately in need of re-wiring and re-roofing. Perhaps, though, in a few years time, we will be able to focus in even more closely, and do a course on just five books, one per day!

Judith Curthoys

An Unusual Incunable

Earlier this week I came across the first 15th century printed book in the Wake collection; Rolewinck’s ‘Fasciculus Temporum’, a chronicle of world events from the beginning of time until the year of publication (not before 1490). The text has sometimes been referred to as one of the first ever best-sellers, in that there were more than thirty 15th century printed editions, in Latin, German, French, and Dutch. The work includes 33 woodcut illustrations, some of which are repeated to illustrate different sections of the text. The illustration which caught my eye in the Wake copy was a small hand drawn picture towards the end of the book. It depicts a figure which most definitely represents a pope, with the curious
addition of breasts. The drawing of the female pope is placed in the section of the text dealing with several years in the middle of the 9th century, and the text lists the popes St Leo IV, Benedict III and St Nicholas I. In addition, there is mention of an English ‘pope’ called John (or Joan) who was found to be a woman.

The Catholic Encyclopedia gives the fabled story of Pope Joan as follows: After Leo IV (847-55) the Englishman John of Mainz occupied the papal chair for two years, seven months and four days. He was, it is alleged, a woman. When a girl, she was taken to Athens in male clothes by her lover, and there made such progress in learning that no one was her equal. She came to Rome, where she taught science, and thereby attracted the attention of learned men. She enjoyed the greatest respect on account of her conduct and erudition, and was finally chosen as pope, but, becoming pregnant by one of her trusted attendants, she gave birth to a child during a procession from St. Peter’s to the Lateran, somewhere between the Colosseum and St. Clement’s. There she died almost immediately, and it is said she was buried at the same place. In their processions the popes always avoid this road; many believe that they do this out of abhorrence of that calamity.

The Rolewinck text indicates that the fabled Pope Joan was indeed, a fable, and cites her absence from the ‘list of pontiffs’ as evidence. Believers in the existence of a female Pope persisted well into the 19th century, despite the lack of historical evidence.

Perhaps the continuation of the fable is due to a universal fascination with tales of women who disguise themselves as men, although the lady in question here did not, perhaps, do a very good job of hiding her femininity.

Elizabeth Mathew
Early Printed Books Project

Library News
Recent events 2005

25 May A group from the University of North Carolina visits the Upper Library.
26 May Learning at Work Day. Library and archive staff show valuable manuscripts and the Audubon folio of bird prints.
13 June Pre-dinner drinks & book exhibition for Chemists.
15 June Students from the Reading Bluecoat School visit the Upper Library.
1 July Pre-dinner drinks & exhibition for chemistry alumni.
10-30 July Students from San Diego Law School are granted permission to use the undergraduate library.
17-23 July Oxford Experience Summer Schools. Library and archive staff conduct seminars on the history of the collections and various styles of manuscript illumination.
24-30 July Inductions to the Library for students taking part in the Theology Summer Schools.
5 September War at Sea in the Age of Nelson : Viewing of Nelson’s fragment of the flag and lock of hair on loan from Corpus Christi College.
9 September Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain Annual Conference : Staff show the Upper Library and a selection of architectural drawings of the “New Library”.
10 September Christ Church Open Day : Staff show the Upper Library to the visiting public.
10-12 September Changing the Climate Conference : Discussion groups are held in the Upper Library.
12 September Cathedral Administration & Finance Association Conference : Staff show the Upper Library to participants.

Noticeboard

Many members of Christ Church will remember Matthew Phillips, who was our Assistant Librarian from 1995 until September 2003, when he left us to take up the post of Systems Librarian at Dundee University Library.

After spending so many years of their lives dealing with library acquisitions, Matthew and his wife, Hilary, have just taken delivery of a new accession of their own, in the person of John Owen Phillips, who was born on Sunday 11th September 2005, weighing a healthy 9lb 13oz.

We have sent our congratulations up to Scotland, and I am sure that everyone who knew Matthew will join us in wishing happiness to his new family. Anyone who would like to see the photographs of the new baby should contact Janet McMullin (janet.mcmullin@chch.ox.ac.uk, tel. 01865 276169).

Janet McMullin

Library Opening Hours (term time)
Sunday : 11am-11pm
Monday – Thursday : 9am - 12 midnight
Friday : 9am - 6pm
Saturday :10.30am - 6pm

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For queries and suggestions regarding the Newsletter, please contact Cristina Neagu.