On Libraries, Henry Aldrich and Oxford’s Early Music Collections

If we were to step back in time to around the year 1700 and imagine ourselves scouring Oxford for places where copies of musical works were owned, we’d find a situation not unlike the one that exists today. All over the city, in the homes, lodgings and college rooms of all manner of people, we’d find small or smallish accumulations of printed and manuscript music.

Almost without exception, the copies would be ones that the owner was either still using or had used in the past; and that’s because the owners would be performers: people who either sang or played musical instruments, either professionally or, in the majority of cases, as a leisure activity.

In fact, the only real difference between then and now was one of gender. Today musicians are as likely to be female as male, but around the year 1700, in Oxford at least, women and girls were a marginal and shadowy presence.

The Stones of Christ Church

Notes on the Old and New Face of the Library

Regular users of the library will have become increasingly aware of the scaffolding rapidly enveloping the building in recent months.

They may also have noticed the relative sparseness of the entrance hall furnishings since the Easter vacation. This summer will witness the first phase of a major restoration of the library which will renew the heating and wiring and complete the stone and roof repairs begun in the 1960s.

The history of the library’s construction is reasonably well documented. Begun in 1717 as a result of a collaboration between Dean Henry Aldrich and Dr. George Clarke of All Souls, the greater part of the “shell” of the building was complete by the late 1730s. Subsequent bequests endowed the library with its outstanding book collection, but this appears to have required constant revisions to the design of the Upper Library furnishings.

Detail of an illuminated manuscript on vellum dating from Queen Elizabeth’s time (MS 112, Transcriptum veterum statutorum et ordinacionum Curie metropolitice). The volume was copied for Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The text is in good condition, but with the binding falling apart, the volume is now in need of conservation.

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The bookcase layout with which we are familiar evolved out of the necessity of accommodating these collections, and may have led to the decision to block all but three of the north windows.

A similar revision to the design was taking place concurrently on the ground floor with the gift of the picture collection, which resulted in the enclosure of the (initially) open colonnade in 1770, several years before the completion of the Upper Library interior.

What is not so well known is the demands placed upon the library’s builder William Townesend, soon after he began the construction of the building. Contemporary accounts describe a man under considerable pressure, perhaps a victim of his own success, being employed upon a great number of prestigious projects in Oxford. As time went on, it became increasingly difficult to secure him to remain continuously at the library.

Initially there were natural breaks, as there were by no means sufficient funds in place to complete the construction continuously, but latterly Townesend’s frequent absences may have become a cause for concern. His early work on James Gibbs’ new Radcliffe Camera presented a particularly tempting distraction towards the end of his life, but he had worked intermittently also on Blenheim Palace, Queen’s College front Quad, The Clarendon Building, Rousham Park and the Robinson Buildings at Oriel College during the lengthy building of the Christ Church Library. As we will see, it is quite possible that these conflicting demands prevented Townesend from devoting the time that overseeing the library construction would have deserved. The library roof was completed in the summer of 1738, but soon after it appears Townesend became ill and he died at the age of 71 in September 1739.

Photographs of the library from the immediate post-war years show graphically the advanced state of decay of much of the external stonework. Constructed of local Headington stone, the extent of deterioration appears to be evenly distributed, leaving the College with little option but to finance a complete re-facing of the most visible elevations. This was carried out over several years up to August 1964, and re-created the intended colour contrast, but on this occasion using Clipsham limestone (from Rutland) for the creamier walling stone and Portland for the lighter highlights on the columns and entablature.

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found in the quarry in its original orientation, known as “on its natural bed”. Difficulties arise when the seam of stone being quarried is not very high, since this will produce rather mean sized stones, something which would have offended eighteenth century aesthetic sensibilities. It is therefore tempting in such a situation to turn a stone on its side to present a wider face to the exterior and thus simulate the appearance of superior stone from a quarry or seam of greater thickness! Over time, however, the face will laminate and result in the situation now to be seen on the south elevation of the library. Might this oversight be the consequence of the forces competing for Townesend’s attention?

As a result, a programme of extensive stone conservation will begin in late June to renew the most severely affected areas.

The stone repairs do not represent the sum total of the external work, for the building will also be re-slated and many of the lead gutters hidden behind the parapets will be renewed to reflect improved understanding of the way in which thermal movement causes fatigue and eventual failure of this otherwise very durable material.

Internally, the driving force behind the scheme has been the need to renew the ageing wiring and improve the heating controls, both of which will be done during the summer work programme.

The opportunity will also be taken to improve the lighting throughout the building and add “wi-fi” zones in the reading rooms in addition to increased fixed internet access at readers’ tables. A programme of cleaning and redecoration will follow in summer 2010.

Rob Dunton
Donald Insall Associates

Details about Donald Insall Associates
Throughout its 50 years the Practice has carried out pioneering work within its chosen field, which has included the design of new buildings for sensitive sites as well as the care, conservation and adaptation of old buildings. Recently, English Heritage has publicised what they consider the top 20 conservation-led development schemes. For 4 of these Donald Insall Associates have been consultants.
In December 2002, conservators at the Oxford Conservation Consortium (OCC) began a pilot project to clean and rehouse the collection of 12,000 medieval property deeds at Magdalen College. Since then, nine conservation students have worked on the deeds as well as six library and archive trainees, who have been drafted in once a month to gain experience of conservation techniques and principles and to keep the project moving forward. About two-thirds of the deeds have now been cleaned and rehoused and we are at last nearing completion of the project.

Apart from their important role as administrative manuscripts, the deeds are extremely interesting and beautiful objects, ranging from very large folded letters patent on carefully prepared parchment with impressive ‘great’ or royal seals, to small lease agreements with one or two small personal seals. The script on many of the documents is very fine, sometimes with calligraphic pen work. The variety of materials used in their construction is extensive: there are different weights and grades of parchment, entire bundles of full sheets of handmade rag paper with untrimmed deckle edges, coloured wax and lead seals sometimes with brocade textiles wrapped around them and finely woven coloured braids of silk and linen.

The collection is an important source of information about materials and techniques used in creating archive documents, as well as in general use, which spans some five hundred years. And of course, as an irreplaceable guide to the college’s historic properties, the deeds are among the most frequently consulted documents in Magdalen’s archives.
humidity and temperature are controlled and closely monitored by a radiotelemetric system.

At the start of the project, the deeds were loose in the boxes, or tied in bundles with cotton tape. They were unprotected from dirt, insects, unclean hands (particularly those that have handled the boxes) and very vulnerable to damage, especially where they had been packed tightly into a box. Conservators at OCC have trained and supervised workers on this project and have carried out the more complex repairs. The challenge for OCC has been to keep a degree of consistency throughout this project as individual workers tend inevitably to interpret project instructions and workflow in slightly different ways.

The 12,000 deeds in the Muniment Tower will be much better protected when they are cleaned, repaired and stored in acid-free envelopes inside the oak boxes, a process that will protect them from further physical damage through unnecessary or repeated handling. A small percentage of items damaged by folding and rolling have been flattened, making them much easier to consult by searchers and preventing further tears, losses, and flaking ink. The majority of items have been returned to the wooden boxes, maintaining an important link with their original storage.

Jane Eagan
Head of Conservation
Oxford Conservation Consortium

Acknowledgements
To the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford.

Further details about the Oxford Conservation Consortium
The Oxford Conservation Consortium was formed in 1990. There are now 12 members: Balliol, Corpus Christi, Jesus, Magdalen, Merton, National Trust, Queen’s, Middle East Centre Archive (St Antony’s), St John’s, Trinity, University and Worcester. The Consortium provides programmes of collection care which include preservation activities, conservation treatments, environmental monitoring programmes, assistance with exhibitions and display, cleaning and rehousing collections, advice on emergency planning and instruction in handling. Conservators carry out a variety of treatments, from simple cleaning, in-situ repair, mounting and framing, rebacking, to rebinding in some cases. The studio has developed expertise in treating all library and archive materials in historic environments.

NADFAS Volunteers in an Effort to Keep the Early Collections at Christ Church Safe

The National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) is an organisation of over 340 societies, with a national and international membership of more than 90,000 men, women and children.

One aspect of NADFAS membership is volunteering for a range of activities, many in the heritage sector, one of which is caring for books. At Christ Church, four societies have joined together to provide a team of 26 people to help library staff look after the physical well-being of the early books.

The volunteers are trained in stages, with simpler treatments being undertaken initially and then, as their expertise increases, more-challenging ones added to their range of skills. Given the length of time NADFAS has worked at Christ Church, some 30 years, it is unsurprising that there is some turnover of volunteers. New recruits have training in basic skills at NADFAS’s head office in London, so that the annual training days at the College may be focussed on the work of the more experienced team members.

The work is designed to stabilise the collection and to identify potential or actual problems. However, major interventive conservation, such as reattaching detached boards, cannot be undertaken on site and has to be sent away for professional attention.

Materials are similar to those used by professional conservators, e.g. Japanese tissues for repairing paper and wheat flour or starch paste as the adhesive. Equipment ranges from traditional bookbinding tools, such as bonefolders, to hatpins, very useful for teasing out tissue fibres.

The worksheets filled in by the volunteers for each book are primarily a record of what treatments they have carried out and, in the case of any leather treatments, the actual dressing used. Libraries suffer from an historic lack of information about repairs, which can hamper or preclude the use of modern conservation treatments.

The worksheets also act as a preservation management tool for library staff. One section of the worksheet relates to the condition of the book about which NADFAS can do nothing and thus provides the basis upon which staff can judge which books require professional conservation and, to a certain extent, roughly how much that work might cost.

Trained volunteers cannot deal with all problems faced by the books; the threats to books are numerous but generally fall into three main categories: environment, handling and gravity.
Environment

The environment in which the books live is the most important element affecting their well-being but in a working library there will always be conflict between the needs of readers and books: the former require high light levels, guaranteed to bleach and break down organic materials over time; they like warmth, which will desiccate and embrittle some binding materials, especially skins; humankind does not like draughts but good air circulation is a key element in preventing mould outbreaks.

A poor environment, particularly a damp one, will provide ideal conditions for mould growth and once books have been attacked by mould, they become predisposed to grow it in the future at humidity levels within the supposedly safe parameters set in the British Standard on the care of paper-based collections. Moulds can be hazardous to human health but a damp environment also enables insects to breed. Christ Church library has had attacks of both Australian spider beetle and death-watch beetle during the past twenty years, both of which were identified by NADFAS volunteers, allowing the damage to be contained.

Whether or not the climate is changing permanently, the last few years have seen a dramatic rise in the number of historic buildings reporting an increased incidence of both mould and insect activity. It is therefore important that those caring for books have an understanding of the different pests and the lifecycle of each and remain vigilant.

Handling

If the environment is as good as can be achieved, another vital element in the continuing well-being of the books is good handling practice. The vast majority of those who read books cause them damage, almost all of which is unwitting, unnecessary and entirely preventable. Unless a book is in a particularly vulnerable state, it should be possible to use it. Nevertheless, poor handling practice will cause damage, so ensuring that books are handled in a way which does not cause them damage is the responsibility of all who use them and not just library staff.

Every reader will, however carefully he or she handles a book, contribute to its eventual demise, because the materials from which the book is made have a shelf life which is not infinite and wear when flexed or touched. However, good handling practice dramatically prolongs the life of a binding and also has financial benefits, as conservation bills are reduced because the length of time between the need for conservation increases. Arguably of greater importance is that the better a book is handled, the longer it is accessible to readers.

Whilst the importance of a book has traditionally been thought to lie predominantly its contents, there is a growing awareness that important information about the book trade and the ways in which books were regarded by their readers may be discovered from the many different ways in which the bindings may have been made. Research by Dr. Nicholas Pickwoad and others has shown that even minor details of binding structures can provide information about when and where and by whom books may have been bound. This is an area previously often ignored when books were repaired, leading to the destruction of, in some cases, important evidence of the provenance of bindings and, where books have been rebound, possibly the only evidence of the earlier binding.

One element of handling which has become the stuff of legend is the myth that there is a need to wear cotton gloves. Clean hands are all that is required to handle all but a very few books and certainly, if gloves are to be worn, they should never be made from cotton. These are abrasive, reduce manual dexterity and, being absorbent, will transfer any grease, acid, hand-cream or dirt onto the book. If gloves are to be worn, they should be tight-fitting and made from latex, nitrile or vinyl.

Gravity

Gravity is the third destructive element, one which is often ignored but which has affected almost all books in stiff boards since they were stood upright from the C16 onwards. Gravity’s constant pull causes the textblock to twist slowly within the binding until, eventually, the boards become detached. The first sign is that the spine, once vertical, begins to slope, then splits appear in the joints and finally the sewing supports give way. The thicker the textblock, the quicker the destruction of the binding and in today’s poorly-bound modern books, the damage is already in evidence before the book leaves the bookseller.

Modern books should be bound with boards flush with the textblock, so that there is no strain on the binding structure when the book is in the shelf and not in use. Unfortunately, this flies in the face of traditional bookbinding and bookbinding companies will rarely acknowledge the logic of this design, stating that the textblock would become abraded. Given that a sagging textblock (a feature of so many modern books even when new) touches a shelf at an angle and is thus even more as risk from abrasion, this argument is spurious.

For an older binding, the solution is for the book to have a bookshoe made for it, a type of slipcase with a block in the bottom on which the textblock rests and thus cannot sag. Bookshoes are too complex to be made by volunteers but some conservators and the Oxford University Library Service can make them to order.
If the three elements of environment, handling and gravity are successfully tackled, there is only one other practice which has the potential to cause damage. Part of the conservation of leather bindings has, traditionally, been the application of polish, ranging from dressings specifically designed for the book trade to saddle soap, baby oil and shoe polish. Today’s conservators use dressings more sparingly, if at all, preferring to focus on getting environmental conditions right and protecting the book with a box or wrapper rather than treating the leather itself.

Given that leather dressings, being a rich source of nutrients, can facilitate mould growth at reduced relative humidity levels, they should be used after careful consideration in today’s damper climate, but there is also the problem of using dressings correctly. The majority are not designed to be used on dry, flaking leather, despite advice on the label often being to the contrary, because if leather is damaged and treated with a grease- or oil-based product, the areas with surface damage will eventually darken and become unsightly and may remain tacky. For some, this is not a problem but for others, changing the look of a rare binding is unacceptable.

Book conservation is a comparatively new field of study, being created, in real terms, as a result of the demands of the wide-scale damage caused by the Florence floods in 1966.

Though founded in traditional methods of restoration and repair, it continues to engage in a close study of a broader spectrum of the factors affecting the well-being of books than was previously the case and, as such, creates challenges for librarians, readers and conservators alike.

At times, conservation practice seems at odds with long-held perceptions about the care of books but its focus is very much to ensure that generations to come may be able to use and enjoy the wealth of material which is held by Christ Church and other institutions across the world.

The NADFAS Volunteers or Heritage Volunteers, as they are now called, have been working in Christ Church Library cleaning and recording details of the books and carrying out small repairs for just over thirty years! That’s an enormous amount of books that have been handled by the various teams. The Volunteers have an initial training in London at NADFAS House with a professional book conservator, then they have an annual retraining in-situ at the library to keep them up to date on the latest thinking and methods, and to refresh them generally. Caroline Bendix is the current conservator.

The books are first cleaned by using a specially designed small piece of apparatus like a cylinder vacuum cleaner and then brushed with very soft Chinese paint brushes. Next, details such as Author, Title and Date and Place of Printing are recorded, followed by descriptions of types of materials the book is made of, and details of any damage that may have befallen the book over the years, e.g. mould, page tears, insect damage, and damage to the cover and spine, etc.

At present there are four teams consisting of 6/7 members per team. We work in the upper Library and each team does one day a month.

As one can imagine there have been a lot of Volunteers involved in the project over the past thirty years, who have given freely of their time, energy and loyalty to this project. Some of the present members have been in Christ Church for over 10 years! A lot of friendships have been formed and much enjoyment has been had from this activity - long may it continue!

J. Deppe
NADFAS volunteer

Until 2006 I was running a private conservation supplies company and our primary occupation was concerned with the conservation of works of art at the Royal Collection, the Royal Household, and other historical properties. Although I saw many wonderful manuscripts in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle over the years, I never actually got involved in the conservation of them. Post March 2006, I am now retired, although I continue to work as a Consultant for the RC and Royal Household in London and around the country.

To ensure my days were further kept busy, I joined the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Society (NADFAS) Henley branch, and it was through this membership I heard about the book conservation work at Christ Church Library. I volunteered, was accepted, and now I cannot tell you how much I enjoy it!
My group is G2 and our team leader is Richard Faircliff. We each select a book to work on from one of two piles on the table. One pile is work in progress, namely work started by the team from the previous Monday, but not completed. We finalize the work and complete the worksheet. The other pile of books is provided by the library staff. These are an assortment of old books which are very much in need of cleaning, repairing and reporting on via the worksheet. Any unfinished, or ‘resting’ repairs are left for the next team to complete on the following Monday.

We work to very strict guidelines and procedures set down in the NADFAS Book Conservation Manual written by Caroline Bendix and Nicholas Pickwoad. Caroline, one of the country's leading book conservators, also runs regular workshops and training sessions in situ and at NADFAS's London HQ.

My knowledge of Latin is rather rusty (school days seem so long ago) but I have booked myself in for a refresher course at Reading University this winter. This will help me in my work at Christ Church I'm sure. To handle so many different, interesting historical documents is, in my view, such a privilege and I look forward immensely to our sessions in the Upper Library at Christ Church each month.

Peter Eley
NADFAS volunteer

My interest in books stems from my time at University studying architecture. I collected books in the fields of architecture and topography, especially of Surrey. During my career as an architect my collecting interests developed to include vernacular architecture and watercolour painting, both of which reflect other active interests.

When I retired I was fortunate to be able to join the NADFAS team working at Christ Church Library and to learn more about the handling and conservation of older books. With my work for the National Trust at Canons Ashby, in Northamptonshire, and at Chastleton House, in Oxfordshire, I have been able to hone my book skills. At Chastleton I am developing a programme aimed to give visitors a greater understanding of the books in the house. This has led me into the area of debate on ‘Conservation v Access’ and the knotty problems that this throws up.

I am very grateful to have had the experience of handling old books at Christ Church Library and hope to able to continue in the future.

Richard Faircliff
NADFAS volunteer

CODICES UNDER SCRUTINY
Manuscript Cataloguing Down the Ages

Cataloguing manuscripts has been a standard undertaking in organised libraries since ancient times. Few ancient catalogues have survived, the oldest having come from the Great Library of Alexandria, Pinakes, of which only fragments remain.

Reconstruction of a possible storage room in the Library of Alexandria. Most of the rolls would have been placed in armaria

We know, however, that there was a cataloguing room in the library and that the task was taken seriously. Although entries in this catalogue were substantially different in content from those found in modern ones, the principles of cataloguing were generally the same as those of modern printed book cataloguing. We should keep in mind that manuscripts were not treated as special collections until after the establishment of printing. Even with the invention of typography, it was some time before printed material became the norm in large libraries, and one suspects that, in the meantime, certain manuscripts carried the status of ‘special collection’ material, depending on their age and the importance of their contents. This is also the period during which the first modern catalogues were created. From the eighteenth century onwards, manuscripts were treated regularly as separate, special collections and they were catalogued accordingly, not only as a medium transmitting text but also as artefacts.

Greek manuscripts in particular form a substantial part of the collections in many major western libraries, and they have largely received the same treatment as Latin ones. The principles of Greek manuscript cataloguing throughout the centuries have been dictated by the need for such catalogues - from locating the book on the shelves, to offering immediately usable information without further consultation of the manuscript. For example, Callimachus’ Pinakes became a bibliographical reference tool in the ancient world: this is why (or because) it contained summaries of the works as well as short biographies, and listed all the writings of the authors treated. Although it was created as a list of holdings in a single library, it was also used as a
guide to (mainly Greek) literature. Today, such a function for catalogues is impractical and unnecessary. The focus in modern times is not only on content but also on the book as an object. Since the Renaissance, content has been viewed increasingly as historical evidence in itself. More often than not, the texts contained in manuscripts are readily available in printed books and it is only with a textually critical eye that one usually looks at the work. There is little need for a summary in the catalogue. Scholars (palaeographers, philologists, historians etc.) require easy access to—at least basic—information about manuscripts: brief descriptions indicating date, contents, format, historical information such as the production of the book or its journey to its present location, and any other interesting features. They use widely circulating catalogues (a development owed to printing), to determine which articles they need to examine in detail, directly or in reproductions. This need has dictated the direction in which manuscript cataloguing has shifted.

Manuscript catalogues are plain, dry texts with no claim to literary merit. Few users can sympathise with a scholar who writes in one line or a couple of words the results of days’, and sometimes weeks’ research. The main principles, therefore, are accuracy and clarity, conciseness and completeness. Allowing for variations in quality, the same principles were also maintained two or three centuries ago, when the first catalogues of most major Greek manuscript collections in western libraries were created. Consequently, is there a need to re-produce catalogues originally created in not so different scholarly times? By any standards, two or three centuries are a long time. But especially in Greek palaeography, the last century or so has seen great advances, both in methodology and in the number and detail of studied manuscripts. These, along with all the bibliographical tools now available, render these first catalogues truly outdated.

Compared with the beginnings of the previous century, we are now in a much better position to date a manuscript on palaeographical grounds. We can also date it by parchment or paper quality and provenance, as well as by paper watermarks. Binding, especially if original, now provides evidence for provenance and dating, while catalogues of bindings offer the opportunity to associate manuscripts separated centuries ago.

Scribe identification is a good example of development in palaeography. In early catalogues, scholars would not normally attempt to identify the scribe of an unsigned manuscript. As palaeography was advancing and scholars continued identifying scribes and solving misidentification mysteries, it became obvious that it would soon become unrealistic or at least counter-productive to attempt scribe identification due to the bulk of scattered material. This is how the Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten 800-1600 (RGC, a tool listing known Greek scribes with samples of their writing) was created. It is now standard practice to check the handwriting of a manuscript against the known hands in the RGC. Numerous such tools are now indispensable aids to cataloguers’ work.

However, not all changes through the centuries were improvements. Although our knowledge of the manuscripts’ historical circumstances is usually enhanced, sometimes it is obscured. Famous cases of early sightings and later disappearance are the Archimedes Palimpsest and the Codex Sinaiticus, both with a happy ending.

Other manuscripts properly catalogued, used in printed editions or in other ways known to scholars, have since been lost. For some works, the editio princeps is the only witness of the text, as all manuscripts (including the ones used for the edition) subsequently disappeared. Destruction of libraries, for example in bombings in the Second World War, contributed to that.

Although the principles of cataloguing remained unaltered, these developments brought a level of sophistication which creates new requirements in manuscript studies in order to advance further. However, the last two decades have also offered a major reason for re-cataloguing manuscript collections: digital scholarship. One of the important ‘luxuries’ of the present day is the wide accessibility offered by digitization and especially the Internet. Manuscript descriptions are now regularly published.
digitally (on data storage media or online) accompanied by sample images of the manuscripts themselves. There are increasing numbers of projects involving digitization of manuscripts and the publication of relevant scholarship online. These are invaluable sources for researchers, who can now access information previously available only in large research libraries. The expense and time spared by having even sample images of manuscripts online is substantial, both for researchers and for libraries. Digitization renders collections searchable and easy to incorporate into databases, which are now indispensable tools in any academic discipline. Most importantly, scholars from around the world can contribute to the catalogues in the form of additions and corrections.

Online publication is a big step forward, but the potential of the digital era will not be fully exploited until this wealth of information is gathered on databases. Large libraries are already providing online catalogues of their manuscript holdings. There is now a new online database created by the IRHT (Institut de Recherche et d’ Histoire des Textes) in Paris, Pinakes, where most known Greek manuscripts from around the world have been included and which is constantly updated. This has already become a valuable tool for scholars. What is yet to be offered is a detailed record for each manuscript, containing all the information usually found in a catalogue. Over the last few years, catalogues of individual libraries have become available in electronic format, but not in a searchable format. Online versions of the catalogue simply make available online a Word Processing document or PDF file with the description of a single manuscript.

The future arguably lies in the combination of the above: a fully searchable relational database containing as much information as possible. Scholars will be able to search not only for specific manuscripts, or all the manuscripts containing a particular work, but also for all those by a single scribe or even of the same date. It will be possible to search for all manuscripts of a certain size, parchment quality, ruling method or quire folding and binding. The benefits of such a database are self-evident and have been visible in similar projects, e.g. papyrological databases. A relational database is hardly economical or worth developing for a collection of less than a few hundred manuscripts. Such a project would only make sense if it included a very large collection or a number of smaller ones (e.g. a database of Oxford Greek manuscripts from the colleges and central libraries). But it is data from these small collections that will populate larger databases. In order to do this, trained palaeographers need to go through the printed catalogues and convert words and concepts into values recognizable by a machine. Ideally, this process would have been automated. In the real world, however, due to inconsistencies in cataloguing and to inaccurate and incomplete information in older editions, the entries of most catalogues must be visited one by one, an extremely costly and time consuming operation. The Pinakes project took approximately a decade only to input the data from printed manuscript catalogues; and this was only for a relatively small number of ‘searching fields’. Does this mean that a full database is an impossible task?

Recent catalogues have improved the possibility to automatically load information in databases, by observing consistency, at least internally. They are also readily available in electronic format. There is room for further improvement. Cataloguers should therefore keep in mind that the material collected in a catalogue might be used in large comprehensive databases in the future. Consistency is now one of the most important principles in cataloguing and it should be observed religiously. Terminology (when not standardized) should be decided upon in a way that could be converted by a machine if provided with the right parameters.

The need for a tool collecting information on as many manuscripts as possible is not new. In fact, the idea of a ‘catalogue of catalogues’ is as old as palaeography itself. It was first attempted in 1739 by the ‘father of palaeography’, Bernard de Montfaucon, in his Bibliotheca bibliothecarum manuscriptorum. Given the sheer number of manuscripts and different

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2 http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr.

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3 This problem is due to the absence of coordinated publication rules for these sources, and it is customarily solved according to individual preferences and the nature of the collection (size, date of the manuscripts, type of material preserved etc.). Relevant problems are described in R. Watson, “Automation and the Medieval Manuscript: out of the MARC and into the Web”, GLM n° 31, Autumn 1997.
libraries involved, such a project might seem like a delusion. On the other hand, for the exact same reasons as well as the rapid pace of advances in manuscript studies, one realises that such tools are in fact essential. To make such a project less daunting, we should start from the raw material, the catalogues.

Maria Konstantinidou
Faculty of Classics, Oxford-Oxyrhynchus Project

Editor’s note

Christ Church library possesses the largest Greek manuscript collection among Oxford colleges. They were part of William Wake’s library, bequeathed to the college after his death in 1737. A considerable number of them date as early as the tenth century and later ones up to the eighteenth century. The Greek manuscripts in Christ Church were listed in 1867 by G. W. Kitchin, *Catalogus codicum manusciptorum qui in bibliotheca Aedis Christi apud Ooxonienses adservantur*. Some of the volumes are described in Irmgard Hutter’s *Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften* (1993).

**Scribal Conversation in MS 152 (2)**

The *Gamelyn*-scribe and the tradition of emending *The Canterbury Tales*

The *Gamelyn*-scribe went to considerable effort by adding an irregular quire of ten folios, now the fourth, to include a tale that is not provided for by the gap left by the Primary-scribe between the canonical *Cook’s Tale* and the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, introducing it with a brief link, reading “Here begynneth the Cokys tale etc.”. *Gamelyn* was copied from a separate exemplar from that used for the copying of the canonical tales. So, the scribe responsible for its inclusion must have considered it an important part of the pilgrimage-frame to add this extra quire to accommodate it or, having been familiar with another manuscript of *The Canterbury Tales* including *Gamelyn*, the scribe must have viewed its absence from MS 152 as a glaring omission. Of course the latter of these two possibilities would suggest that the *Gamelyn*-scribe is not also the Primary-scribe, for if he were, then why would he have waited to copy *Gamelyn* on to an additional and irregular quire instead of copying it immediately after the *Cook’s Tale* in the remainder of the third and beginning of the fourth quires? While the extant descriptions of the manuscript do not speculate concerning the identity of the exemplar used in copying *Gamelyn*, they all mention the most curious feature of this witness of what is the most popular apocryphal tale found among the extant manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* - the ornate blue capitals with which only this tale is extensively illuminated.

These blue capitals, found elsewhere only in two locations within the *Parson’s Tale* and in the first line of the *Siege of Thebes* (though in a very different style there) may suggest something about the possible exemplar of *Gamelyn* and, more to the present purpose, something about the significance of the manner in which its scribe has simultaneously distinguished it from and integrated it with the canonical tales already copied into the manuscript.

One wonders about the significance of this scribe’s use of blue capitals throughout the text of *Gamelyn*, at the beginning the Ira and Luxuria sections of the *Parson’s Tale* at f.261v and f.270v respectively. These quadratic capitals As more closely resemble the style of the blue capitals one finds in *Gamelyn* than they do the blue, cursive, capital W beginning the *Siege of Thebes*. At the beginning of each episode, the narrator of *Gamelyn* addresses the audience with a variant of a formula seemingly designed not only to get their attention but also to affect a covenant with the audience—along the lines of ‘listen and hear and pay attention to what I am saying’—who will only hear what the narrator promises in a thematic forecast of the episode. For example, the poem begins on fol. 58v with a direct address by the narrator to his audience/reader. This is signalled by a blue, quadratic, capital L, three lines in height:

The beginning of *The Tale of Gamelyn*
Christ Church MS 152, f. 58v

Similar blue capitals (all the letters L save one, a N, beginning the word “Now listen …” at line 551, f. 66v) mark equally formulaic addresses to the audience by the narrator at the beginnings of episodes that might previously have been orally delivered. Then, of course, there are the other sort of blue capitals found in this witness of *Gamelyn*, which mark important narrative movements within these episodes. For example, a blue capital A, one line in height, with which Gamelyn indicted the prelates allied with his eldest brother, Sir John, who stands between him and his inheritance:

The Tale of Gamelyn, line 509, MS 152, f. 66r

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1. Ibid, f. 58v.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid, f. 66r.
This capital, which is typical of this second type, marks a speech by the hero who, in this instance, addresses an entire class of ancillary characters allied with the villain, his eldest brother, Sir John the younger.

There are 14 more blue capitals of these two types to be found throughout the text of *Gamelyn*, which divide fairly evenly among the two aforementioned types. In the first one hundred and ninety-one folios following *Gamelyn*, all of the illumination and rubrication accords with the fifty-eight and a half folios preceding *Gamelyn* in style and in its uniformly red color. So, when blue capitals closely resembling those found throughout *Gamelyn* appear again in the *Parson’s Tale* and another, though one quite distinct to those found throughout *Gamelyn*, appear at the beginning of Lydgate’s *Seige of Thebes*, it is significant.

Functionally, there is nothing obvious about the blue capitals to be found in the *Parson’s Tale* that distinguishes them from those red capitals preceding and following them in the copying of this tale as most distinguish the beginnings of subsections of the text while some others appear to have been deployed by the scribe to emphasize the focal terminology of the Parson’s treatise on sin and penitence (more a tract than a tale, inasmuch as the term “tale” connotes narrative).

Both of the blue capitals herein mark the beginning of substantive sections of this treatise. The first of these, located on folio 261v, is a blue capital letter A, four lines in height, close in style and shape to the on-line blue capital A found in *Gamelyn* (Fol. 66r) marks beginning of section subtitled “De ira”:

![The beginning of the “De ira” section of The Parson’s Tale](image)

While this blue capital A, four lines in height (five including the extended left descender), is somewhat faded (perhaps partially erased or copied over a pre-existing erasure) in comparison to the primary text and the rubricated section heading, “De ira,” it is clear enough in the above image to demonstrate a strong similarity the blue capitals to be found throughout *Gamelyn*.

Another, similarly styled blue capital A, three lines in height, marks the beginning of the section titled “De Luxuria” on folio 270r.

This blue capital A, a little more than three lines in height including its cross bar (four lines in height including its longer left descender), beginning the section of the *Parson’s Tale* subtitled “De luxuria,” closely resembles the aforementioned capital A found on folio 261v. Moreover, both of these blue capitals more closely resemble the capitals of the *Gamelyn*-scribe, in particular the capital A on fol. 66r, than they do the red capital As found throughout the rest of the *Parson’s Tale* and the other canonical tales copied by the Primary-scribe. Those square capital As are less squat, have longer left descenders and employ more ornate capital As, whether rounded or square in orientation. Either the Primary-scribe is rubricating out of character in these instances or these blue capitals are the work of another scribe, presumably the *Gamelyn*-scribe unless there was a fifth hand involved in the copying of this manuscript, for which there is no other evidence.

The case for the anomalous blue capitals found in the *Parson’s Tale* not being the work of the Primary-scribe is strengthened when one considers the style of the equally vibrant but significantly more ornate (i.e. rounded rather than square) blue capital W, six lines in height, with which the copying of the *Siege of Thebes* begins on folio 282r. The style of this capital W is distinct from that of those blue capitals found in *Gamelyn* and the *Parson’s Tale*—it is significantly more rounded by comparison to the quadratic orientation of the aforementioned capitals—but it does bear a strong resemblance to the red capital W with which the Primary-scribe begins the General Prologue on folio 2r. Because this capital W is so markedly distinct in style not only from the capitals found in *Gamelyn* but also from those found in the *Parson’s Tale*, both As which are in turn distinct from the many other capital As found in that tale, it seems likely that the blue capitals found in the *PsT* are also the work of the *Gamelyn*-scribe, rather than that of the Primary-scribe. The upshot of this distinction is that the *Gamelyn*-scribe may have taken the Primary-scribe’s lead in copying his non-Chaucerian text from a separate exemplar, in a manner authenticating it as a valid Canterbury Tale even while distinguishing it from the rest of the tales in the manuscript, much as the Primary-scribe has visually distinguished Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes*, a text whose pilgrim-narrator distinguishes himself from...
The PloughT-scribe and the concept of a complete text

The Gamelyn-scribe is followed chronologically and, in a way, methodologically, by the PloughT-scribe who copies the Table of Contents on to the previously blank folio 1v and, as this moniker suggests, the Ploughman’s Tale on folios 226v-231v. This scribe fits Hoccleve’s Marian tale into the gap between the Squire’s Tale and Second Nun’s Tale with the addition of a prologue written in rhyme royal stanzas matching the style of Hoccleve’s poem and prefacing the rhyme scheme of the Second Nun’s Tale. In so doing, the PloughT-scribe fills the lacuna left by the Primary-scribe who left blank the remainder of folio 228v, after the breaking off of the Squire’s Tale, and the whole of folios 229-231, presumably in the hope of finding something (perhaps the remainder of the Squire’s oriental romance) with which to fulfill the Squire’s promise to his audience of accounts of many great and as yet untold marvels. Left with a lacuna not unlike that following the incomplete Cook’s Tale, the PloughT-scribe addresses it in a manner not unlike that of the Gamelyn-scribe’s addition of a non-Chaucerian tale to the text, grafting Hoccleve’s Marian tale into these open folios (though without adding an extra quire).

The PloughT-scribe has also adopted the practices of his predecessors in importing a tale matching the style—i.e. rhyme royal stanzas—of the subsequent Second Nun’s Tale and introducing it with a prologue written in the same sort of stanzas. The PloughT-scribe even follows the Primary-scribe’s practice of distinguishing stanzas of rhyme royal tales with marginal pointers. The PloughT-scribe’s efforts to integrate Hoccleve’s tale visually, as well as stylistically and thematically with the Second Nun’s rhyme royal life of St. Cecile demonstrate that he valued the appearance of wholeness in this articulation of the Canterbury Tales above all other considerations (e.g. authorial and orthographic authenticity). Inasmuch as his efforts are premised upon the practices of his predecessors, the contributions of the PloughT-scribe are the culmination of a progressively multigraphic and multivocal approach to compiling the Canterbury Tales.

By turning back to the PloughT-scribe’s Table of Contents, we can learn a great deal about how the whole of this rendition of The Canterbury Tales was conceived by the end of its production:

Table of Contents, MS 152, f. 1v

Herein, the PloughT-scribe leaves a space sufficient for another entry between those for the Parson’s Tale and Lydgate’s Siege of Thebes, which is later

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7 Ibid, f. 283r, in the margin near lines 92-93—"I answerd my nam was Lydgate / Monke of Bury in my fifty winter of age"—appears the gloss, “Lydgate monke of / Burye” in the hand of the Primary-scribe.

8 Ibid, f. 228r, SqT, 658-660.
filled by the Churl-scribe with an entry for his text, but does not allow sufficient space between the entries for the Squire’s Tale and Second Nun’s Tale for an entry for the Ploughman’s Tale, which he had to squeeze between those for the Squire’s Tale and Second Nun’s Tale. So, it appears he copied the Ploughman’s Tale into the manuscript after copying the Table of Contents and making numerous corrections throughout the manuscript. This suggests that his choice of Hoccleve’s Marian tale was not merely one of convenience and that this scribe copied into the text after inscribing this table of contents, in which the collective is presented as a whole book, with each tale titled as a part of the pilgrimage-frame. Note the presentation of Gamelyn as “The Cokys Tale of Gamelyn” and Lydgate’s Siege of Thebes as “The Monk of Burys Tale of The Siege of Thebes.” The Thomas Marshall Collection of English Civil War Pamphlets

One Man’s Record of ‘ye late troubles of England’?

On 18 April 1685, Thomas Marshall, Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, departed this world for the next. Described by Lincoln College historian Vivian Green as ‘undoubtedly one of the most impressive scholars of his generation’, Marshall is remembered as one of seventeenth-century Oxford’s leading Philologists. Author of Observationes de versione Gothica and Observationes in versionem Anglo-Saxoniam, subsequently published as Quatuor D. N. Jesu Christi Euangeliorum versiones... (2 vols., Dordrecht, 1665), Marshall also mastered Frisian, Arabic, Armenian and Coptic along with the more traditional Greek, Latin and Hebrew. He is also credited for pioneering the study of Icelandic at Oxford.

Although his personal publications were few, Marshall’s lasting legacy was the support and guidance he provided to his contemporary scholars,

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and the texts and manuscripts which he bequeathed to the university and to his college, through which Marshall continues to support academic enquiry from beyond the grave. These bequests are detailed within Marshall’s will. Two draft copies of Marshall’s will, both dated 1675, survive today. One can be found in the archives of Lincoln College, the other among the papers of the illustrious Anthony Wood (Bodleian Library, MS. Wood F. 39, fo. 19).

Upon his death, Marshall directed his executor John Kettlewell to ‘give to the publick Library of the University of Oxford all such of my Books, whethern manuscript, or Printed, as are not in the s[d] Library already, & w[ch] the keep[er] of the s[d] Library, & my Exec’ter, shall thinke fit for it’. This bequest amounted to four hundred and three books, and one hundred and nine manuscripts. The legacy included many rare titles in languages such as Frisian, Irish and Romanian.

By similar instruction, the bulk of Marshall’s private library was bequeathed to Lincoln College, a donation which amounted to a further one thousand and forty texts. No single text was mentioned by name, with Marshall relying solely upon the discretion of the Bodleian, Lincoln College and his executor to decide which titles were accepted into which library. All unwanted titles were to be sold and any amount raised was to be added to the bulk of Marshall’s estate.

Only one single bequest was afforded special mention. Marshall instructed, ‘more particularly I ordaine that the seventy & seven Vol: in Quarto, most concerning the late troubles of Engl[d], & now standing upon the two uppermost shelves on the North & West sides of my Study, be placed in the s[d] College Library’.

Despite the value and rarity of many of the books and manuscripts Marshall donated to the Bodleian and Lincoln College Libraries, it was these seventy-seven volumes of cheap printed ephemera for which he displayed particular concern.

Marshall’s careful instructions have ensured that his pamphlet collection has survived intact. All of the seventy-seven original volumes are still locatable within Lincoln College Library, although centuries of re-cataloguing and re-shelving have resulted in the extant volumes being no longer shelved together as one distinct collection.

Descriptions of the collection are tantalising, but infrequently found within secondary literature. Fleeting reference is made to ‘77 volumes of civil war pamphlets’ within Marshall’s entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Similarly brief references can be found within The Victoria County History entry for Lincoln College, and Vivian Green’s college history.3

Contemporary collections of English Civil War pamphlet material are rare. Many of those which have survived either intact, or in a fragmentary form; such as those of John Rushworth, Sir William Clarke or George Thomason, may not be representative of general patterns of contemporary print consumption. John Rushworth and Sir William Clarke’s collections were both compiled by men actively involved in political events. Rushworth, appointed ‘licenser to the press’ by the House of Commons in April 1644, not only collected print material during the conflict, he helped to shape it. Similarly Clarke, Rushworth’s assistant from 1645 onwards, provided the New Model Army with news and intelligence, and so was equally embroiled in political affairs. Furthermore, both men regarded their collections as extensions of their own professional record of events. Meanwhile, George Thomason’s collection of ephemera, containing over twenty-two thousand print items, whilst constituting an amazing reference resource, may tell us more about one man’s personal obsession than about popular print consumption. And yet, the poor survival rate of contemporary collections of printed ephemera has ensured that these men’s collections have played a pivotal role in shaping our understanding of seventeenth-century print culture.4

Initial comparison with surviving seventeenth-century sale and library catalogues suggests that, in both size and content, the Marshall Collection may provide a more ‘typical’ example of contemporary English Civil War pamphlet collections than those of Rushworth, Clarke and Thomason.5 Numbering just over two thousand items, the Marshall Collection is substantial in size whilst at the same time not too large to prove overwhelming. It is therefore surprising that it has been the subject of so little scholarly attention.

Closer analysis confirms the huge potential of this collection, whilst simultaneously raising important questions about both its contemporary compilation, and the composition of the collection as it survives today.

Born on 13 January 1621 at Barkby, Leicestershire, Thomas Marshall was the son of an illiterate blacksmith. Fortunate in the receipt of a solid education from local vicar and Lincoln College alumnus, Francis Foe, Marshall followed in his tutor’s

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2 Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, s.n.
footsteps and matriculated as a servitor of Lincoln College in October 1640, at the age of nineteen. A promising student, he was elected to a Robert Trappes scholarship the following year. However, dark clouds had begun to gather on the political horizon and academic trials were soon replaced by tests of political loyalty. The first eighteen months of Marshall’s time at Oxford saw college, university and town become increasingly embroiled in the nation’s growing political conflicts. Despite the parliamentarian leanings of many within Lincoln College’s hierarchy, by the summer of 1642, a strongly royalist faction had emerged. It was to this faction that Thomas Marshall was drawn. The King’s arrival at Oxford in October 1642 saw the University transformed from a seat of learning into a military command centre. Many members of Oxford’s academic community fled to the provinces, but Marshall remained, and in 1644 he joined Henry, Earl of Dover’s University regiment, serving as a volunteer and maintaining himself at his own expense.

By remaining in Oxford, Marshall was well placed to purchase royalist material; however, parliamentarian material is also well represented within the collection. This need not necessarily be a surprising discovery. Many individuals attempted to gain a balanced view of the conflict. Parliamentarian print was certainly available in Oxford, just as royalist tracts were in London, but procuring large numbers of such pamphlets on a regular basis may well have cast aspersions upon an individual’s allegiance. This would have posed a significant risk during such tense times.

The presence of so much parliamentarian material within the collection therefore requires explanation. One possibility was that Marshall, having developed a taste for ephemeral print, continued to acquire such material throughout his lifetime, supplementing those texts he had purchased on publication. It was in this manner that the great print collections of men such as Anthony Wood, Samuel Pepys and Elias Ashmole were compiled.

However, closer reading of Marshall’s will presents an alternative explanation. Of the pamphlet collection left to Lincoln College, Marshall takes pains to explain that ‘the one Moity is the gift of Mr Edw Bolles, a Lincolnshire Gent; & now a Merch in London; the other Moity is given by my self.’ Reference to this comment is not to be found in any of the secondary literature detailing the collection’s provenance, but its impact upon our interpretation of the nature and composition of the collection is profound. The ‘Thomas Marshall Collection’ does not represent one, but two men’s contemporary records of print produced during the English Civil War.

An Edward Bolles or Bolle (variously spelt) was born in 1603, the youngest son of Sir John Bolle of Haugh, Lincolnshire. Bolles was one of eleven children, nine of whom appear to have survived into adulthood. In 1621 Bolles became apprenticed to Thomas Smyth the elder, Merchant Adventurer and member of the Skinners’ Company. He completed his apprenticeship in 1632, subsequently becoming a freeman of the same company. Details pertaining to the next twenty-five years of Bolles’ life are few. There are unsubstantiated references to Bolles being ‘abroad’ during the years 1638-9, but secondary accounts provide no further details of Bolles’ life until he was appointed alderman for Billingsgate in 1657, and a member of the Common Council for Cripplegate Within, 1663-4. It is known that Bolles owned East India Company stock during the period 1660-79, and died in November 1680 at Clapham, Surrey. His will was proved in December 1680 and testifies that he had accumulated considerable wealth.

As both extant drafts of Marshall’s will pre-date that of Bolles, it is unsurprising that within Bolles’s will no reference is made to his portion of the pamphlet collection. Ownership of the collection had already been transferred to Marshall. Furthermore, whilst

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8 Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, s.n.
Bolles makes substantial bequests to a great number of individuals and institutions, no reference is made to Marshall or Lincoln College. This indicates that Bolles did not share a close affiliation with either during the closing years of his life. Further examination of the lives of both men is therefore required in order to ascertain how the two men were acquainted, and exactly when Marshall supplemented his own collection of Civil War ephemera with that of Bolles. Like many royals, Marshall fled abroad following the King’s defeat in 1646. He secured the position of chaplain to English Merchants Adventurers based in Rotterdam, later transferring to Dordrecht when a new trading base was subsequently established there. Although it is unclear exactly when Marshall crossed the channel, he was certainly abroad by 14 July 1648, when he was expelled from Oxford University ‘in absentia’ during the Parliamentary Visitors’ purge of Royalist academics and students.12

Within the Warner Papers held at The National Archives, there survives an account ledger and a number of letters written by Edward Bolles to George Warner; all are postmarked Rotterdam and written during the early 1640s, the latest dating to 1644.13 Bolles, it seems, was stationed as a Merchant Adventurer in Rotterdam during at least the first half of the 1640s. Records confirm that Bolles had returned to England by 1657, because it was then that he was appointed alderman for Billingsgate. However, the exact date of his return from the Netherlands is unknown. It is possible therefore that Bolles was still in Rotterdam at the time Marshall arrived. If so, it is highly likely that Marshall would have become acquainted with Bolles, in his capacity as chaplain to the Merchant Adventurers. Sadly, there is a paucity of records relating to this period in either man’s life and therefore contemporary evidence surrounding the collection’s compilation has not survived. Bolles’ letters seemingly predate his sale or gift of the collection to Marshall, and Marshall’s surviving papers are predominately post-Restoration in date.14

There is no contemporary catalogue of the collection. A list of some of its contents appears within the papers of Anthony Wood (Bodleian Library, MS. Wood E. 10, fo. 246-296), but this records less than two hundred and fifty of the two thousand pamphlets within the Marshall Collection. Lacking in any clear strategy, Wood’s ‘catalogue’ of the collection can be regarded as idiosyncratic at best; a red herring which does little to help answer questions surrounding the collection’s current composition. The only surviving evidence therefore is the collection itself. The Marshall volumes are identifiable within Lincoln College’s wider library collections, primarily by binding. All seventy-seven volumes are bound in white vellum bindings, of a Dutch style.

Shelves from the Thomas Marshall Collection, Lincoln College Senior Library. The collection consists of 77 white vellum bound volumes of tracts pertaining to the English Civil War, all but thirteen of which are shelved together.

The spine of each of these volumes has been labelled by what appears to be the same hand and usually incorporates a lozenge-shaped design. This design is common not only to the Marshall pamphlets within Lincoln College, but also appears upon various texts bequeathed by Marshall to the Bodleian. For example MS. Marshall 105, a small commonplace-book now held by the Bodleian Library, is similarly bound in white vellum and the labelling on the spine is again very similar to that of Marshall’s pamphlet collection.15

A uniform style of labelling has been applied to the spine of each volume within the collection, Lincoln College, O. 3. 8

13 The National Archives, SP 46/85/1 (Warner Papers), fo.88: George Warner to Edward Bolles; 22 April 1642; SP 46/84 (Warner Papers), fo.191: Edward Bolles to Warner, Rotterdam, 14 May 1642.
14 Bodleian Library, MS. Smith 45, fo. 109a: William Marshall to Dr. Bernard, 3 December 1669; MSS. Smith 52, fo. 159: William Marshall to Dr. Smith, 29 November 1676.
Such examples support the thesis that it was Marshall who labelled the spine of each volume with the express intention of developing a ‘house style’ for his collection. The volumes appear to have been bound in a seemingly uniform manner to complement the bindings of others within his personal library.

However, the homogenous appearance of Marshall’s pamphlet volumes is deceiving, and closer inspection identifies two distinct forms of binding. One part of the collection has benefited from the application of expensive Dutch-style bindings, using good quality white vellum. These volumes have yellow and blue ‘headers’, blue/green speckling and ‘yapp’ edges which are indicative of Dutch binders, although not exclusively.16 The volumes bound in this manner are also the most well-preserved within the collection, the vellum remaining supple and the bindings firm.

A second portion of volumes are bound in a cheaper style of binding which looks similar, but is not identical to that applied to the first portion. The vellum with which these volumes are bound is of inferior quality. Over time this has become brittle and now requires careful handling. This cheaper style of binding does not include headers or ‘yapp’ edges, although the blue/green speckling is similar (for example, Lincoln College, O. 3. 17). It would be highly convenient if volumes bound in one manner could be attributed to Bolles and the other to Marshall. However, in examining the Marshall volumes bequeathed to the Bodleian, it is apparent that he owned numerous texts bound in both styles. MS. Marshall 105, for example, is bound in the cheaper style, whilst another volume, Marshall’s copy of the 1654 edition of Richard Baxter’s The saints everlasting rest... (Bodleian Library, Mar. 98), is bound in the more expensive manner.

Furthermore, an examination of the watermarks which appear in the fly-leaf of each volume suggests that the two types of binding were produced at roughly the same time and quite possibly by the same binder, one being a cheaper approximation of the other. The most commonly occurring watermarks within the collection are two double-headed eagles. Despite comparison with a large number of watermark samples reproduced in a variety of resources, including two excellent online databases, the Watermark Database of the Dutch University Institute for Art History & the Piccard Watermark Database, the closest matches can be found within Edward Heawood’s Watermarks: mainly of the 17th and 18th centuries.17 The tracings reproduced within this volume are insufficient in detail to allow an exact match; however, the eagle designs within Heawood which bear the closest resemblance to those within the Marshall Collection all date between 1633 and 1652 and are Dutch in origin.

16 For information regarding the bindings applied to Marshall’s pamphlet volumes, I owe a great debt to Professor Mirjam Foot and Julian Roberts who visited Lincoln Library in 2008, and also to the Lincoln College Library staff.

17 Edward Heawood, Watermarks: mainly of the 17th and 18th centuries, Monumenta chartae papyraceae historiam illustrantia, i (Hilversum [Holland], 1950).
The front fly-leaf of Lincoln, O. 3. 23 bears a watermark which is a very close match to Heawood 1301, and can be traced to paper being produced in Schieland, near Rotterdam around the year 1652.

Other volumes, such as Lincoln, O. 3. 3, bear a watermark which is a very close match to Heawood 1303, and can be traced to paper being produced in Amsterdam around the year 1644.

More crucially perhaps, the Bodleian Library’s MS. Marshall 105 commonplace-book contains the Heawood 1301 eagle watermark throughout (not just on the fly-leaf). The front fly-leaf of this commonplace-book also bears the inscription ‘Rotterdam. febr. 14. th 1650 styl. nov., prijs vjth’ providing an internal dating reference for the former of these two watermarks. As they appear indiscriminately within both the cheap and expensively bound volumes, it seems likely that both forms of binding date to the late 1640s or early 1650s.

Why these volumes have been bound in two separate styles, we can only speculate upon. Perhaps, Bolles, an established merchant, bound his collection prior to passing it on to Marshall. Marshall may then have sought to bind his own pamphlets to match. An exiled student of humble background, he may have been forced to opt for a cheaper style of binding which complemented the bindings of the volumes he had acquired from Bolles. As time passed and his own personal circumstances improved, Marshall was able to furnish his library with other texts, bound in a more expensive binding. This is, of course, pure supposition and the reverse could have been just as likely.

The matter could be simply resolved if either man had been in the habit of placing ownership marks upon their pamphlet purchases. Regrettably, this does not appear to have been the case. Where ownership marks can be found, they belong to neither Marshall nor Bolles suggesting that one, or possibly both men were in the habit of purchasing second hand tracts (Lincoln College, O. 3. 18 (4)). This was a reasonably common practice during this period.18

A copy of A true relation of the passages which happened at the town of Portsmouth at the late siege, which began the 12 day of August last... (London, 1642), bears the ownership mark ‘Arthur Brunn’ on the back fly-leaf of the tract., O. 3. 18 (4)

The collection itself actually bears little evidence of either Bolles or Marshall’s ownership. There are few examples which hold even a passing resemblance to Bolles’ hand. Meanwhile, extant examples of Marshall’s handwriting show him to have been a man who adapted his style of writing to complement a variety of tasks, making it very difficult to ascribe annotation or marginalia to him with any degree of certainty. As Marshall would have been able to annotate his pamphlets at any point up until his death in 1685, only Bolles’ annotations, if they could be confidently identified, would constitute a reliable method of assigning original ownership.

Even the handwritten tables of contents, which adorn most but not all of the volumes, cannot confidently be attributed to Marshall. However, as they appear in

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more than ‘one Moiety’ of the collection, it seems unlikely that they were penned by Bolles. Some of the tables of contents display additional expressions of artistic flair which could be indicative of ownership if proven to be distinctive (for example, Lincoln College, O. 5. 13). Many of those which appear within the Marshall volumes at Lincoln College are similar to examples found on Marshall volumes within the Bodleian Library (for example, MS. Marshall 105).

‘Artistic’ swirls applied to a table of contents, O. 5. 13

Sadly, even these seemingly distinctive and individualistic artistic flourishes must be regarded as red herrings. An account ledger drawn up by Bolles during the period 1642-4 indicates that he possessed a similarly artistic temperament.  


Subsequently, such ‘doodles’ cannot further our understanding concerning which portion of the collection belonged to either man. Nevertheless, such puzzles and challenges regarding the manner in which the Marshall Collection was compiled only add to the appeal of this rich scholarly resource.

Ultimately, close analysis of Thomas Marshall’s collection of English Civil War print serves to highlight the challenges faced by any student of early modern print culture, and the importance of employing an interdisciplinary approach. It is only by pursuing all available lines of enquiry: historical, biographical, bibliographical and anthropological, that we can assess the wider historical significance of such a collection’s creation, composition and survival.

Annette Walton
Linacre College

The work of an anonymous author, the picture dates from the late 16th century. Catherine Hilliard, the Librarian at St John’s College, noticed it resembles a print by Willem Jacobsz Delff (1580-1638) issued in Holland, possibly after the portrait by Daniel Mytens, Charles I of 1628 in the Royal Collection.

It may be surprising to us now, but it was not that uncommon for artists in the past not to disclose their identity. Like many of his contemporaries, the painter of this portrait opted to remain unknown. In contrast, his treatment of the subject was meticulously detailed. Not only did he choose an instantly recognizable representation of the King, but also enclosed what might look as a superfluous explanatory text on the name and function of the character represented:

“Serenissimus Potentissimusque Princeps Carolus, Dei gratiae, Britanniae Magnae, Franciae & Hiberniae Rex fidei Propugnator etc.”
The iconic face of King Charles I was often painted. There are 148 identified portraits, the best known (5 in number) being the work of Anthony Van Dyck. St John’s drawing is not in the same league. As a work of art it may be regarded as rather awkward. Despite this however, the value of this particular drawing relies on something very different and refreshingly subtle. Painted in brown ink and metalpoint, this portrait is largely monochrome. Except for the blue ribbon supporting the King’s medallion, everything in this composition is in pale tones of sepia. The use of the metalpoint is particularly interesting. It covers extensive areas of the portrait, complementing the gold strokes in the clothing and hair, the straight lines of inscription and, most of all, the eyes. Their sad, proud, piercing look catches the viewer’s attention, channeling it towards the more striking elements of the drawing.

Without any doubt, one of these elements is the blue of the ribbon. The colour and thickness of it contrasts dramatically with the lace-like texture that constitutes the rest of the drawing. Interestingly, tests have revealed that the pigment so heavily applied to the ribbon is a later addition.

The effect is somewhat disconcerting, but one has to agree that it does soften the visual impact of the water damage and perhaps (in a symbolic way), does also allude to the state of mourning incurred by the events which led to the abolition of monarchy.

The execution of the King in January 1649 created an underground movement against the new political order instituted with the Protectorate. From the point of view of the royalists, the death of King Charles I was regarded as martyrdom.

The story of the St John’s portrait is directly connected to this underground trend and to a book published only a few days after the execution. This volume, Eikon Basilike,1 was set to haunt the decade that followed. Passing as an anthology containing personal reflections of the King, this publication marked the beginning of the cult of Charles I. In less than two months the volume (issued in secret) went through at least sixteen editions and was translated into Latin, Dutch, French and German. During the first year there were sixty different editions altogether. Most of them pocket-size, easy to hide, but also easy to carry. Very much like a prayer book.

Irrespective of edition, the book has the same frontispiece, namely an engraving by William Marshall. The image reflects the idea of representing Charles as a saint and martyr.

The design has many similarities with Titian’s painting St.Catherine of Alexandria (c1568), which Marshall might have been familiar with, as it was in the King’s collection.

Marshall’s elegant portrait shows Charles kneeling in prayer and grasping a crown of thorns (inscribed Gratia), with his regal crown (inscribed Vanitas) at his feet, and a third crown (inscribed Gloria) awaiting for him in heaven.

The composition suggests two comparisons. On the one hand, there is the obvious imitatio Christi motif. On the other, if we take into account some of the poems in the volume, the engraving hints at a parallel with David.

The analogy between Charles I and David may be traced (though in a less straightforward way) in the portrait at St John’s as well.

In this case, the function of what was initially a somewhat flat and uninspired drawing changed dramatically almost overnight. By virtue of becoming the object of real pilgrimage, the portrait turned into the equivalent of an icon. This phenomenon is in part explained by the fact that during the Civil War Oxford University was largely on the side of the monarchy (with Parliament having moved to the Convocation House and the King living at Christ Church).

Beyond the historic context favouring the metamorphosis of this portrait into an icon, a careful look at the composition reveals a rather puzzling element. The King’s hair is unusually long and undulating in waves over his left shoulder. Adding to the riddle, tradition has it that the lines in this section of the portrait are, in fact, text. More precisely, the text of the Penitential Psalms. A possible parallel between Charles I and David is thus suggested in no ambiguous manner.

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1 Eikón basiliké.: The pourtraicture of His sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings, with a perfect copy of prayers used by His Majesty in the time of his sufferings. Delivered to Dr. Juxton, Bishop of London, immediately before his death (London: 1649)
It is however not so much the motif, but the form which the latter takes that makes this drawing altogether exceptional. Like a secret code deeply embedded into the underlying structure of the artifact, the meaning which this portrait was invested with appears to depend almost entirely on its form delivering the content intended.

The problem here is that, rather disappointingly, no clear script could be easily revealed under normal magnification. This does not necessarily imply that there could be no script. But, one wonders, if the supposed text were really absent, would the picture be a failure?

At first sight, one might assume that both form and content could be seriously flawed by being void of the expected connotations. It is true, script has been elusive. But, irrespective of what future and high tech equipment might reveal, a fact remains.

Past generations were certain that the psalms were there. They did not need proof. They did not need to see the letters of the text in order to believe. This is the key to our understanding the mysterious portrait at St John’s College in Oxford. It is in the unwavering faith of the beholder that the image crosses the boundaries and turns into an icon. It is in the belief that the verse must be there. Pulsating miraculously from a space hidden from the eyes. A space however no less accessible and relevant. A locus amoenus, volatile and full of poetry, the coordinates of which reside not necessarily in the reality surrounding us, but in ourselves, in our innermost humanity, a humanity quickened by intelligence, creativity and love.

There is also a certain detached, light humour in all this: an artist assuming the role of an unlikely homo ludens challenging his audience with a riddle. Is there a text at all? Chances are there is not. Then again, there may be … Under the pale but sharp metalpoint of endless curves and razor-thin lines, the answer is in front of our eyes. Tangible … And yet impossible to touch!

Cristina Neagu
Christ Church

Acknowledgements
Kind thanks to Catherine Hilliard, Librarian of St John’s College, Oxford.

On Libraries, Henry Aldrich and Oxford’s Early Music Collections

Turning, then, to these male owners of music around 1700, we find that they, like performers today, tended to know one another. Musical works often require a group of singers or an ensemble of instrumentalists to collaborate, and that brought these people together. Communal music-making is of course a great leveller of society: people who might otherwise have little to do with one another can develop a real rapport with those who, like them, have a good singing voice, or play the violin well, or can accompany at the keyboard. Thus in Oxford around 1700, some strange musical friendships must have existed.

In the colleges of the University, for instance, junior undergraduates might make music with their tutors, or even with the president or head of college himself. A celebrated example of a musical head of house would be Narcissus Marsh, first of Exeter College, later President of St Alban’s Hall. Marsh famously held a weekly music meeting in his rooms, for invited guests only, and some of the music-books he and his fellow musicians used still survive today.

After Marsh left Oxford for Dublin, the action moved to Christ Church, where Henry Aldrich, Dean of the college, welcomed musicians to his lodgings for convivial but rigorous weekly music-making. Here the social mix was more varied: in addition to full members of the University, Aldrich invited singing-men from the Cathedral, whose social rank was inferior to the dons and the gentlemen-commoners with whom they joined forces, but who were probably the better musicians. Again, many of the manuscript and printed copies used by the performers at these weekly meetings have survived.

On the fringes of the University, there was a network of professional performers who earned their keep through music-making. One group of them has already been mentioned: the lay clerks and organists who served the four choral foundations - Christ Church, Magdalen, New College, and more intermittently St John’s. Boy choristers should also be included here, since in effect they too were getting on with a job, not singing for pure enjoyment. In addition, there were groups of instrumentalists – the city waits and the university waits – who performed in various capacities around Oxford, and taught other people how to sing, play and dance. All of these professionals would have owned copies of music. Some of them probably owned rather a lot of music.

There would be times when the amateurs and the professionals joined forces outside the college walls.

2 The latest news is that script has indeed been recently identified. More on this in an article by Catherine Hilliard to be published soon (catherine.hilliard@sjc.ox.ac.uk).
These occasions really did mix people drawn from totally different ranks of society. For instance, around 1700 there was a musical club that met once a month at the Mermaid Tavern at Carfax. Its stated aim was to make music; and the club’s membership brought together an unlikely mix of college dons, cathedral lay-clerks, professional fiddle players, and other assorted musicians drawn from various walks of life. This club too needed music to perform; and this time the copies were bought and owned collectively, not individually. Thus we arrive at a new category of music-ownership.

Around 1700, much as today, it made sense for institutions to own and centrally curate the music they performed, since this ensured that copies would always be to hand when needed. The choirs of the four choral foundations – Christ Church, Magdalen, New College and St John’s – have always had their own choir libraries; and if today these libraries contain rather less really old music than we might wish, we can blame that partly on the destructive forces of the Reformation and the Commonwealth, partly on the general tendency of our ancestors to discard music that had fallen out of favour or fashion. This last point is an important one. Around 1700, there was little interest in really old music; instead, performers constantly sought repertory that was fresh and new. The point is neatly demonstrated by the club that met at the Mermaid Tavern: although no trace remains of the music library it assembled, we do have lists of the music that was bought and performed, and most of it was fashionably up to date. Older music, we assume, was simply thrown away.

Without question, the largest ‘institutional’ collection of music was the one owned centrally by the University. During the course of the seventeenth century, it accumulated an impressive working library of music, which was housed in a room marked ‘Schola musicae’ (‘Music school’) in Schools Quadrangle at the Bodleian. Today we might think of this room as being part of a library, but in the seventeenth century it was genuinely a place where music was performed, and where the music-books were kept for the convenience of the musicians.

The great 1674 catalogue of the Bodleian Library’s books makes no mention of these musical items, for the simple reason that the music collection was genuinely the property of the Music School, not of the Bodleian.

The Music School collection came into being through a benefaction, the terms of which had significant implications for its future. The donor, William Heather, was a professional singing-man from London. A good friend of William Camden, he was involved in establishing the Camden chair of history at Oxford University; but Heather himself could not be described as a historian or an antiquarian. In 1627, Heather endowed the Music School as a place where members of the university could come to sing, play instruments, and receive instruction in performance. (It was not established as a resource for learning about the history of music; nor did it offer instruction in composition.) In order that the musicians should have something to sing and play, Heather donated his own personal music library to the Music School. And he stipulated that his books should not ‘be lent abroad upon any pretence whatsoever, nor removed out of the School and place appointed’. The day-to-day running of the Music School was to be supervised by an appointed person who, by the middle of the seventeenth century, was known as the ‘Music Professor’ or ‘Heather Professor’. It must be stressed, though, that this was not an academic post; the post-holders were all practicing musicians, not college dons.

At the time of its donation in 1627, the music given by Heather was stylistically up-to-date, and no doubt it served its purpose very well. But by the time of the Restoration, it must have seemed quite outmoded, and efforts were made to expand the repertory. This was done partly by purchase, partly by donation, partly through handwritten copies made by the Professor or for the Professor, and also by one major acquisition. In 1667 the then Professor, William Lowe, managed to acquire the music-books of Dudley, third Baron North, of Kirtling in Cambridgeshire. This was a large accumulation of music, much of it still quite new, and when it reached the Oxford Music School it must have put William Heather’s original music-books in the shade.

Nonetheless the old Heather books were not thrown away, since according to the terms of the benefaction they were not to be removed from the room. Instead, they simply lay there gathering dust. By this process, the Music School collection started to acquire historical depth, not intentionally but rather by accident. As the years went by and as further new layers of repertory were added, so the old ones were pushed further back into the cupboards; but none was destroyed, and with the exception of a few items that were stolen, nothing was actually lost. Today the Music School collection survives more or less intact, curated by the Bodleian Library.

The word ‘collection’, however, is really something of a misnomer. More accurately, we should call it an ‘accumulation’. At no point were items added to it because they were old, rare or curious, and if anything of that kind did come in, it arrived as part of a job lot. In other words, no ‘spirit of collecting’ underpins the Music School books. In fact, no real ‘spirit of collecting’ can be discerned in anything mentioned up to this point. To find true evidence of that spirit, we need to look to the last quarter of the seventeenth century, and focus on one man: Henry Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church. Aldrich came up to Christ Church in 1662 at the age of fourteen. Choral services at the Cathedral, which had been silenced.
by the Commonwealth, were now just beginning to resume with music for choir and organ, and the young Aldrich was on hand to witness this. Being musical himself, Aldrich himself took part in these services as a singer; and almost certainly he played instruments too. The Cathedral Organist, William Lowe – who was also the Professor of Music; the two posts were often held in combination – probably played an important part in enhancing Aldrich’s musical skills. No doubt the two men were often to be found together not only in the Cathedral, but also in the Music School on the other side of the High Street. Moreover, the young Aldrich would have been on hand in 1667, when the Music School acquired that major collection from the Norths of Kirtling. These early experiences evidently had a lifelong impact on Aldrich, who later became a true and important collector of music.

Precisely how this happened is unclear. At first Aldrich, like the other musicians around him, probably possessed only the music he aimed to perform. But at some point, probably in the 1670s, he either bought or was given the huge music collection accumulated over many years by the Hatton family, a dynasty of music-loving patrons whose careers had intertwined with the English monarchy from Queen Elizabeth up to the Civil War. By acquiring the Hatton music, Aldrich found himself the owner of a collection that had huge historical depth – far greater than that of the Music School. For the rest of his life, Aldrich kept on adding music to his collection. Little is known about his sources and methods, since his personal papers were all destroyed at his death, according to the terms of his will. But he must have bought some of it, and other items were almost certainly given to him. And on his death in 1710, Aldrich left his music to Christ Church Library, along with all his other books, and his important collection of prints.

Why did Aldrich give his music to Christ Church, not to the Music School or the Bodleian? His reasons are not difficult to infer. Because the Music School was principally engaged in performing new music, it was not the obvious place for Aldrich’s collection, which contained so much antiquated repertory. The Bodleian had no tradition of owning and curating old music, and Aldrich’s collection would probably have flummoxed the Bodleian’s librarians, had it fallen into their hands.

At Christ Church, conversely, there was a community of musicians who already knew Aldrich’s collection, and would be in a better position to attend to it after his death. Significantly, though, Aldrich made his donation to the college’s Library, with no mention of borrowing rights. Evidently, then, he expected his music to sit on the library shelves, where it might henceforth be consulted by curious readers, but not actually be used by would-be performers. It may be an exaggeration to claim that British music collecting, as we understand that term, began with Henry Aldrich in Christ Church. Nonetheless, if we draw a line between ‘accumulation’ on the one hand, and ‘collecting’ on the other, then it probably is fair to say that Aldrich was Britain’s first significant music collector. All those before him were principally accumulators of music. It may be relevant that Aldrich spent his entire adult life in Oxford, surrounded by people who collected other kinds of books and objects, often competitively with one another. At least Aldrich, by collecting music, was in a field of his own, and could exercise his vice without too much financial pain.

Above all, though, Aldrich deserves to be called Britain’s first major music collector because he ensured the future of his collection by donating it to Christ Church. As Aldrich himself observed in the terms of his donation, the collection contained ‘things of value in themselves and to be found in very few Libraries’. Much of the music he owned might, in other hands, have been used for lighting fires, or for other more ignominious purposes. But Aldrich made sure of its preservation; and by doing so, he helped change Britain’s relationship to its musical past.

John Milsom
Christ Church

Learning and the Goddess
Documenting life in a Delhi slum

Christ Church Library, Archive and Picture Gallery contain tens of thousands of objects and texts which bear witness to the creativity, culture and intellectual activity of those who lived before us.

Carefully recorded in ink, paint, stone or print, their physicality guaranteed them a degree of permanence, and our commitment to their conservation is a promise of their availability to future generations. In our current information age the record of so much human activity is made available
electronically, but its permanence and accessibility in the future is harder to guarantee. Digital media needs to be copied and recopied as modes of storage change, and there is a risk if we surrender to Google and YouTube the responsibility for keeping our records safe for the future.

In Christ Church I have the small but important role of accumulating and keeping an archive of photographic images from around the college, pictures of its daily life, its staff, students, and the ebb and flow of significant moments. We are beginning to keep photographs of senior members taken more informally than in the past, and digital recordings of their talks to their colleagues which give such insight into the life they have been part of here.

This Easter I had the chance to go to record someone else’s educational activity and was photographer in residence for a small slum school project in SW Delhi, called Saakshar (Hindi: “literate”).

Each day I sat on the floor with tiny children, listened to their songs, watched their participation in the classroom activities, and recorded with my camera the extraordinarily important learning which was taking place.

There is nothing revolutionary about the ABC and simple counting games but the basic learning they begin at Saakshar will enable them to move into mainstream education and its teachers will support them until they are not just ‘literate’ but also ‘educated’ and qualified for work which will fulfil and reward them properly, lifting them out of the slum and the life sentence of poverty.

It was a privilege to record their first learning experiences, as much as it is a privilege to record our own finalists heading past the Library in sub-fusc to sit their final examinations.

While I was there I also found myself recording another event which took me back to my own studies in social anthropology and Indian ethnography.

The slum community which Saakshar mainly serves is called Nasirpur, and having got to know the slum and a number of families there over the previous two weeks, I went to take some more photographs there on my last day.
To my surprise, the people who would normally head off early to look for work were all at home, and a great preparation was underway for the celebration of the last day of the religious festival of Vasanta Navratri, a festival to the Goddess Durga. Throughout the day I was privileged as their guest to photograph all aspects of the festival. It began with baths under a bucket in the lanes of the slum, bangle sellers and barbers doing great business, drummers and musicians getting themselves prepared, and the cooking of food for the community to share.

Later in the day as the festivities got going there were many chickens to sacrifice, women in procession with baskets of bright green shooting wheat grown in secret over the previous week, women possessed by the Goddess dancing through the crowd, and men having their faces pierced with five metre long poles, to show their devotion. Face to face with the faith of others, I was honoured to have the chance to record the expression of that community’s belief and devotion.

With the privilege goes responsibility, a responsibility for me to preserve what I have been allowed to witness and record, and to allow others to safely share it. It is a responsibility I will try to fulfil.

Revd Ralph Williamson
College Chaplain and Website Editor at Christ Church

Editor’s Note
For photographs and information about the Saakshar slum school go to http://saakshar.chch.ox.ac.uk

The winners of the 2009 Christopher Tower Poetry Prize, the UK’s most prestigious award for 16 to 18 year old aspiring poets, were announced on 23 April 2009 at a luncheon reception at Christ Church in Oxford attended, amongst others, by the Lord Mayor of Oxford and the Dean of Christ Church.

Seventeen-year old Timothy Carson from Sullivan Upper School, Belfast was awarded the £3000 first prize for his poem, Is Life Likely?

Winner of the second (£1000) prize is Iona Twiston-Davies (Matthew Arnold School, Oxford) with Grey Mile and the third prizewinner (£500) is Paul Merchant from Tonbridge School, Kent with his poem, Three Guesses. The prizewinners’ schools each receive £150.

In addition to the three main prize winners, four short-listed winners will also receive £250: Charlotte Turner (Varndean College, Brighton) for Doubt, and three students from St Paul’s Girls’ School, London - Sophie Stephenson-Wright for Villanelle, Emma Jourdan for Evidence, and Bethany Altman for Contact.

The 2009 competition theme was ‘Doubt’. The record number of entrants, all born between 1990 and 1993 and representing every region in the UK, were inspired by the topic which included many diverse and thought-provoking interpretations including the use of sea and fog, hunger and juries, playing cards and bus stops as well as the inevitable, Thomas.

The judges included Jane Draycott, a UK-based poet with a particular interest in sound art, and collaborative and digital work, Daljit Nagra, winner of the Forward Poetry Prize in 2004 and 2007, and poet and lecturer Peter McDonald, Director of Tower Poetry.

Since 2000, the Christopher Tower Poetry competition has drawn attention to the huge creative potential of young adults in UK schools. The Tower competition is open to all sixth-form students in UK secondary schools and colleges.

Many of the competition’s past winners have gone on to achieve further acclaim for their writing in other competitions or in the publishing world. Its growing reputation for discovering fresh and exciting poetry talent is part of several initiatives developed by Tower Poetry at Christ Church to encourage the writing and reading of poetry by young adults.
Other projects include summer schools, poetry readings and conferences, teachers' workshops, an ongoing publication programme and a website which is used as an educational resource in schools.

2009 Tower Poetry prize winners

All the winning poems are available to read on the Tower Poetry website (www.towerpoetry.org.uk). Further information on the competition and other Tower projects can be obtained by writing to info@towerpoetry.org.uk or phoning 01865 286591.

Kathryn Grant
Christopher Tower Poetry Administrator

Note to editors:

The Christopher Tower Poetry Prizes were launched following a bequest to Christ Church, Oxford, which provides for the promotion of the art of writing poetry in English. The prizes aim to encourage the writing of poetry amongst young people in the 16-18 year-old age group by establishing an annual set of prizes on a given theme.

Picture Diary (1)
The Transformation of a Library

With the Library now all shrouded in scaffolding, many might wonder what has happened inside since the works began in February. The place is beyond recognition, yet, until the end of Trinity, it has to function as much a possible as if there were no disruption.

Major building works are scheduled for 2009 and 2010, and documenting every stage of what will be a lengthy and complex process is an important thing to do. This will ensure that there is plenty of evidence about a crucial period in the history of the Library for future generations. With this in mind, we have started a detailed database where everything is recorded.

Apart from the documentary value and the help it will provide to put all back in place at the end, attention to details such as date and provenance (before insuring the art objects to be stored away) has led to a few spectacular surprises.

One of these is pushing the date of Aphrodite, one of the statues in the Upper Library, back to the 3rd century AD. More on this, in the next issue of this journal.

To start with, at the beginning of the Easter vacation, all antique furniture, paintings and sculptures were professionally packed and stored in one of the many climate controlled storage vaults of Constantine Ltd., a company with specialist divisions in art and antique storage.
Next came the first test of the new lighting scheme, early in April. Huge interior scaffolding was put together to reach the high ceilings of the various Library reading rooms.

Many adjustments need to be made to get the lights right in terms of looks, brightness and colour temperature, but we hope all will be achieved.

Before we vacate the building at the end of June, all books from the free-standing bookcases in the Upper Library need to be boxed and sent to Deepstore, a long-term archive storage company based in Cheshire, which offers ideal temperature and humidity controlled conditions in what, incidentally, was a salt mine.

In order to protect the books which will remain in the Upper Library, large wooden panels and flame retardant temporary protection were put in place. The Upper Library looks very different now, with all the early printed books behind intensely yellow screens. The collections will become available again starting with October 2009, but will have to be encased once more during the summer of 2010, when the second stage of the building works is scheduled to take place. The library will be closed to everybody during the summer of 2009. For the period, the staff will be available as usual, but will be based in other rooms in College.

Christ Church Library Newsletter
http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/librarynewsletter

Illustrations for this issue from material in Christ Church Library and Archives, Magdalen College, Lincoln College, St John’s College and the National Archives. Original photographs by Ralph Williamson, Rob Dunton, Jane Eagan, Annette Walton, David Burton (Tower Poetry), Tom Costello (photo enhancement of Charles I drawing) and Cristina Neagu.

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Journal produced on a Rex Rotary MPC2000 colour MFP Aquilina Technologies Ltd. Tel: 01689 825 161
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