



## BRASENOSE COLLEGE

·UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



### **Brazen Nose October 2012**

### **Library and Archives Report 2012**

#### **Liz Kay, College Librarian**

Last year I ended my report on an optimistic note: that the awaited library expansion project would get underway in 2012. I was not disappointed.

The start of the year saw key members of College, led by the Bursar, engaged in producing supporting information and an Architect's Brief for the redevelopment of Old Cloisters. The process of gathering information served to reinforce what many of us had believed for some time i.e. that developing the Old Cloisters into a Reading Room is not merely a desirable luxury, it is essential if we are to provide the very best facilities to support our students in their studies. We felt that it really was important to involve the students and so in addition to finding out why they like to work in the BNC library we co-opted a graduate (Mathilde Couliard) and an undergraduate (James Norman) from our library student representatives group to join the Bursar, Fellow Librarian, Librarian, former Fellow Librarian Dr Ed Bisham and Dr Owen Lewis on the Old Cloisters Steering Group. The interviews took place in April and although the interview panel was perhaps unusually large this was surely the best way to ensure that we appointed the most suitable architect for the project? Before the interviews there was some concern that there would be very little to choose between those invited for interview but ultimately there was one architect who stood out and the decision to appoint Lee/Fitzgerald was unanimous. Everyone is very excited about working with Tim, not only because he is a first class architect who has recently worked on a large project at Wadham, but because he was a graduate at BNC and has a real feel for the College, is sensitive to our needs and has a clear understanding of what we want to achieve. Let the fundraising begin.

Following the completion of Project Q in April we were able to use the Old Cloisters as a temporary reading room, furnishing it with a selection of tables, chairs and sofas not currently in use elsewhere. This was brilliant because it provided many extra study spaces during Trinity and thus eased the pressure on seats in the main library. It was also an important exercise in trialing different workspace configurations and the impact, if any, of allowing students access to the small kitchen area to make themselves drinks at any time of day or night. This space will continue to be used as a reading room during term time and we will be monitoring all aspects of usage to assist with the decisions to be made about the area when it is redeveloped.

The Old Cloisters was not the only area in College to be made in to a reading room during Trinity 2012. Following a request from graduates for yet more study space, the Stocker Room, recently vacated by the Fellows, became a designated library space for a term. We are proud that with the addition of this room we provided more study spaces for students preparing for finals in 2012 than ever before.

While the Old Cloisters is very much a work in progress we have been able to offer some improvement in working conditions for the students in the Hulme library. Brighter lights were installed over the summer and the sun now shines through the glass in the ceiling giving a much lighter and brighter feel to the whole area.

Towards the end of the summer there was as flurry of activity with weeding and the purchase of new books. Weeding, a necessary evil in libraries, is particularly difficult in the humanities compared to the relatively clear cut decisions that can be made about books in the sciences. Nevertheless we have succeeded in removing enough books from the shelves to make way for some exciting new books for our users. More weeding needs to be done and more books purchased to refresh collections in several subject areas, yet despite the need to keep within budget, we hope that by making judicious purchases we can look forward to enjoying healthier collections within the library by this time next year.

This year library induction sessions for undergraduates featured a new induction movie made by the students for the students. The movie, hastily made in Trinity by 2<sup>nd</sup> year Tommy Peto and friends, had a Pythonesque quality about it and despite some technical issues successfully conveyed the library rules and regulations in an unorthodox way. It was regarded as a success because it raised a smile from induction weary freshers but more importantly because it taught them the rules and key points about using the library in a memorable way. We plan to continue with a combination of formal and less formal sections in future library induction sessions and look forward to a group of 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> years coming forward in June to make a movie for the 2013 cohort.

Although there has not been a considerable amount of activity on the Library and Archives blog owing to more pressing student centric matters, we h still managed to keep it going and earlier this year created our first Podcast. With Shrove Tuesday in our sights we were lucky enough to persuade 4<sup>th</sup> year Tim Ramsey to record an old Ale Verse and it was ready for release just before that traditional February date when the Ale Verses are sung in Hall. In May we released our second Podcast, this time thanks to Alumnus Stephen Phelps. Stephen called in to the library to present a copy of his book "The Tizard Mission" and afterwards very kindly agreed to make a recording for us; you can hear him talking about his book on this BNC podcast introduced by Archives Assistant Georgina Edwards. <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/tizard-mission-audio>.

The focal activity for the Archives during 2012 has been the cleaning project and this will continue throughout 2013. With the project well underway planning the refurbishment of the archives store will soon commence. It will be some time before BNC can boast clean, mould-free archive material held an archive store to be proud of, but with careful planning over the next year or so this is what will be achieved. The generosity of Sir David Akers-Jones in funding the cleaning project has significantly improved the fate of the BNC archives and this is hugely appreciated by the College. The creation of an appropriate archives store, together with a programme of conservation repair, should secure the archives for generations to come.

The special activity for the Library in 2012 may have been kick-starting the Old Cloisters Project but current students are our first priority all year round. Once again we delighted in the comments overheard as hosting students showed prospective students around on the three successful open days held in June and September. It is always entertaining to hear what people have to say about the library, and although there are usually a few statements that are be little odd or misleading, mostly what we hear are students waxing lyrical about the library: the setting, the ambience and the sheer pleasure of working in it. Throughout 2013 we will strive to make the BNC library as good as it can be and work on developing plans for the Old Cloisters project to create a space which although different in style will emulate the joy that people feel about the Main Library.