



Brazen Nose October 2013

Library and Archives Report 2013

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2013 has been a positive and exciting year for the Library and Archives. Key areas of achievement have been the progression of plans for Old Cloisters and the cleaning and refurbishment project for the Archives. These are the first significant changes to Library and Archives for many, many years and both are of immense value to the College. The redevelopment of the Old Cloisters has been talked about for some time now; we all know that it is not something that will happen overnight however it is thrilling to be part of what will be only the third serious refurbishment in the history of the library. (James Wyatt's in the 1780's and the installation of the bookcases we see today in 1891 being the other two.) How fitting that one of Brasenose's own is the architect involved?

Cleaning of the archives and refurbishment of the archive store is, like the library redevelopment, a slow burn project. Nevertheless, it is crucial if the College is to maintain its historical archive in good order and develop it further as current material is gathered to become the archival material of the future. The aim is to create an area where the newly cleaned archive material can reside safely for hundreds of years and where ultimately it will be more accessible and readily available for wider use within the College Community.

Alongside these exciting projects the day to day activities in the library perhaps seem a little mundane? They are however important and well worth reporting. In the last academic year we were able to purchase many more books for the library than in recent years thus improving the collections for our students. It is true that the volume of online material (books and periodicals) is increasing rapidly but hard copy is still important to our library users who regularly use a combination of online material and physical books. There is most definitely a demand for (physical) books and as long as the demand is there we will do our best to meet it by investing in books that our students need.

There was the usual demand for seats all year round but the respect and consideration shown by library users towards one another this year was second to none. This generated a positive atmosphere throughout the library; during Trinity in particular, when tensions often run high, the library generally felt industrious and inviting. With the co-operation of the current student body we look forward to achieving the same in

2014. We continue to make use of the Old Cloisters and Stocker Room as additional reading rooms when appropriate in order to provide as many study spaces as possible for quiet, contemplative study.

The Library Representatives Group continues to meet one a term and this year one of the members, Classicist James Norman, bravely volunteered to make the 2013 induction movie for Freshers. These no-budget movies have become a tradition and are usually made in a matter of days (or hours!) at the end of Trinity term. The latest was no exception. Fortunately, despite the number of out-takes outnumbering usable footage, there was sufficient material to create an excellent, entertaining movie. The final production successfully imparted useful library information and offered welcome light relief to our Freshers midway through a week of information overload and partying. The applause at the end of the first screening proved that it was appreciated and well worth the effort. We would like to record special thanks to all those involved but especially to James Norman, filmmaker and star of the movie, Dr Ed Bispham, James Blythe and Andrew Sillett who threw caution to the wind for the sake of the library.

While our main focus is the modern collection that is used by BNC students on a day to day basis we also have to look after our older collections: pre-1640 and 17th & 18th century. Cataloguing of these books is progressing slowly (slow being better than not at all) and it is very satisfying to see more and more of our old old books on OLIS. During the summer we engaged a book valuation company to value the books in these collections. The information was required for insurance purposes but it was clear that the overall benefit to the College would be far greater than a mere list suggesting figures for our most valuable books. With so many of these books not yet catalogued inviting an expert in the field to assess them was not only revealing but also great fun. It was such a delight to receive enthusiastic comments about some of the books in our collections and once we have received the full report we intend to start featuring some of the more interesting items in the Library and Archives Blog.

We look forward to 2014 being a year in which we make further progress with our plans for Old Cloisters. Equally, if not more importantly, in 2014 we will do our very best to provide as many books and to offer as many reader spaces as possible in a warm and inviting environment conducive to study and learning.