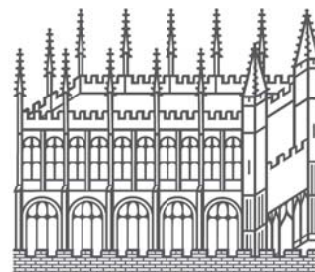


From Bodley's Librarian

May 2010



Sarah E. Thomas
AB Smith, MS Simmons, PhD Johns Hopkins
T: +44 (0)1865 277166
E: sarah.thomas@bodleian.ox.ac.uk

The Bodleian Library
Broad Street
Oxford OX1 3BG
www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk

Dear Friend

In mid-April, the Bodleian Libraries held a conference for members of our staff and other librarians at Oxford. The University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Andrew Hamilton, led a question-and-answer session in which he spoke about the role of the library in supporting the academic mission.

Following Professor Hamilton was a panel of three academics representing the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. Common threads running through each of their lively talks were their increasing reliance on electronic resources and the way in which the access to digital information had lessened their need to spend time in the library.

The role of the library in the advance of scholarship: three case studies

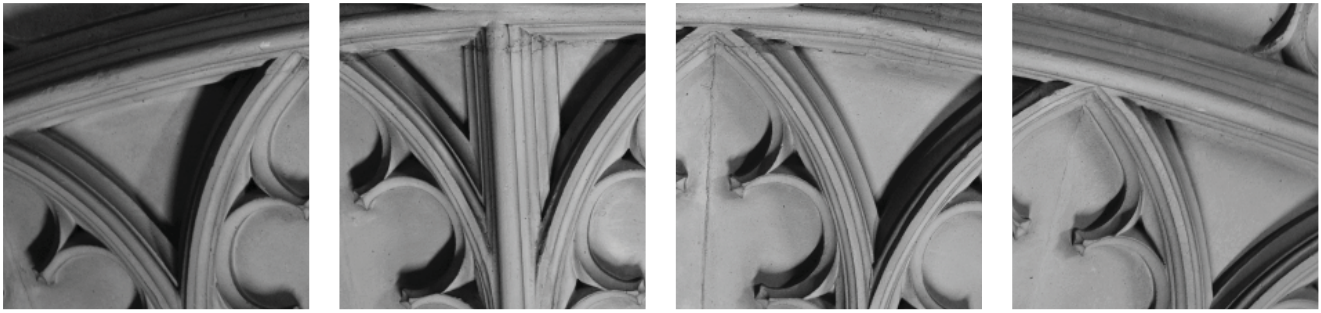
Dr Martin Castell, a University lecturer in the Department of Materials, provided a riveting summary of his research interests and some of the online tools available through the libraries that help him stay on top of his field of atomic-scale structure and surfaces of nanostructures. The proliferation of publications in a wide range of journals made it impossible to scan printed periodicals in a reasonable timeframe. Now, using ISI's *Web of Science*, he can locate in a few minutes what might have taken days to accomplish reviewing print. And, by using the feature which links to citations of his work, he can rapidly scan highly relevant articles.

Federico Varese, Professor of Criminology at Linacre College, a specialist in organised crime, the Russian mafia, and corruption, illustrated his methodology for tracing developments of criminal behaviour by



showing how searching for particular terminology in Google Books identified the earliest use of certain phrases. The ability to search across large bodies of texts not only accelerated his research, but uncovered examples that would have lain hidden in the analogue world because they were contained in unexpected works.

The third panelist, Dr Carlyne Larrington, had spent the past two terms on leave while researching Old Icelandic and Norse mythology. Although she had anticipated the need to decamp to the Bodleian and the English Faculty Library to consult their trove of materials, she found, much to her satisfaction, that she could locate much of what she needed on the internet. Indeed, not only could she consult the texts in the comfort of her home, but she found her research greatly facilitated by her ability to search on individual words in sagas, something that would have been tedious and time-consuming in a manual environment. She also waxed enthusiastic about time-saving enabled by *RefWorks*, a product that helps gather, manage, and store information as well as produce citations and bibliographies. The Bodleian Libraries provide advice and training in its use in their popular WISER (Workshops in Information Skills and Electronic Research) lunchtime series.



Digital and print: the compelling duality of the modern library

Is the evidence clear, then, that books are dead and all is digital? Should we shut the Great Gate to the Old Schools Quadrangle and close our libraries? The answer is a resounding no. Despite clear indication from these three Oxford academics and a multitude of scholars and students that access to the internet, digital files, and the tools to search and manipulate them are increasingly important, the value of libraries continues to grow.

First, it is critical to highlight that although the panelists declared they no longer needed to “use the library”, each was in fact benefiting from the services of the 21st-century library.

Without a subscription purchased by the Bodleian Libraries at a cost of over £20,000 to *Web of Science*, our scientists could not be competitive. This single database was used over 150,000 times in one year. Some 140 million pages from Oxford’s collections were digitised by Google, contributing to the corpus of texts searched by our social scientist and humanities scholars. And a host of other digital initiatives undertaken by the Libraries populate the increasingly rich digital world being explored by the ‘Republic of the Learned’, the society of the educated for whom Thomas Bodley established his university library at Oxford.

We are pleased to announce that Dr Leonard Polonsky (1950, Lincoln College) is helping to fund our digitisation efforts with a generous pledge of £1.5 million. Dr Polonsky, reading that the Bodleian Libraries were seeking £3 million as part of its campaign, has made his generous gift to increase access to our collections, and hopes to motivate others to join him. George Blumenthal, an American non-alumnus, has contributed support valued at over £250,000 to digitise our significant holdings of Cairo Genizah fragments, which are among the great treasures of the Bodleian’s world-renowned Hebraica and Judaica collections.

Other digital efforts underway include the scanning of Ordnance Survey maps and a joint project to unite the Shakespeare Quartos held by the U.S. Folger Shakespeare Library, the Bodleian, and other eminent institutions in a single online archive, for which the Bodleian received funding from the Joint Information Systems Committee to transfer the magic of the page to the screen.

Writing about the opening of the Shakespeare Quartos Archive (www.quartos.org), *Guardian* journalist Louise Tickle captures her experience of seeing the real thing:

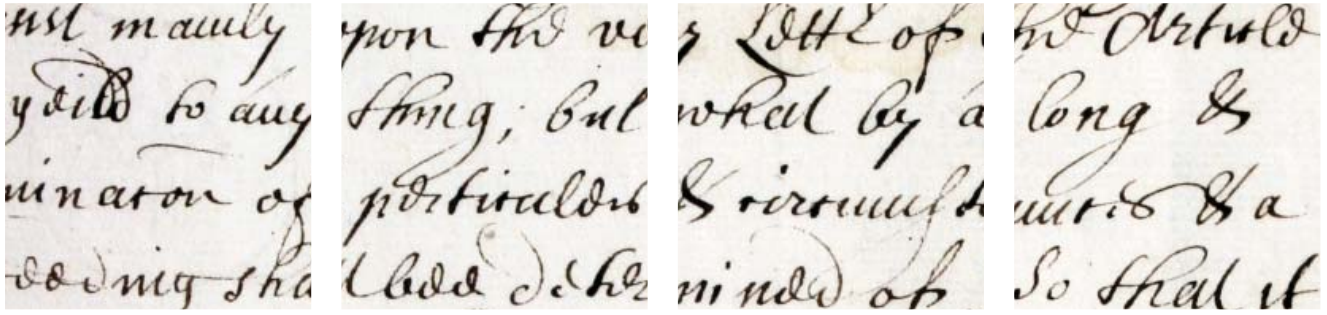
“In an ordinary room off a beige corridor in a dull 1930s Oxford building, four priceless editions of Hamlet lie thrillingly open on a round table that used to belong to John Ruskin.”

It is precisely this duality of the modern library today that is so compelling. It is not that digital eclipses print, but that each medium offers advantages and features of complementary value. It is the power of the digital, with all of its distinctive qualities – such as ubiquitous access, the ability to compare geographically dispersed materials side by side, and the capability of mining texts to reveal new veins of scholarship – that creates the momentum for the digital metamorphosis of our cultural heritage.

At the same time, the magnetism of the original is profound. The physicality of the object, and its provenance and rich history, inspire a reverence that compels both collectors and readers to seek out books, manuscripts, music, and maps unabatedly. Although the growth of use of digital materials continues to rise year after year, our statistics show the use of the paper collections remaining steady at approximately two million consultations annually.

Images

Front cover: Sarah Thomas and Andrew Hamilton at the 2010 Bodleian Libraries’ Conference; *above:* detail of the Divinity School ceiling; *above right:* detail of the Carte Papers, post-conservation; *right:* Philip Pullman at a Bodleian masterclass; *back cover (top):* detail of the Old Schools Quadrangle; *(bottom):* Magna Carta.



Opening up the wonders of the Bodleian to the public

Drawing on the chemistry that ignites when authors, works, and readers are combined, the Bodleian Libraries' Centre for the Study of the Book has held a series of masterclasses. Most recently, Exeter College alumnus and Oxford honorary degree recipient Philip Pullman (pictured, below) captivated a packed Holywell Music Room on the topic of the making (and faking) of *Lyra's Oxford*, the manuscript of which he presented to Dr Chris Fletcher, our Keeper of Manuscripts, at a reception in the Divinity School, following his stimulating dialogue with his publisher, book designer, graphic artist, students, and members of the public.



When the "dull 1930s Oxford building" (the New Bodleian Library) referred to by Ms Tickle emerges from its chrysalis as the Weston Library in 2014/15, we will be able to delight many more people with the manifold treasures and extraordinary artefacts now sequestered in the murky depths of the Bodleian.

A public exhibition of plans for the £78 million renovation went on display to much acclaim in February. An imaginative re-design by architectural practice Wilkinson Eyre, propelled by an exciting programmatic vision of Richard Ovenden, Keeper of Special Collections and the Libraries' Associate Director, provides the basis for the transformation of Giles Gilbert Scott's book fortress on Broad Street to an inviting space for scholars and the public alike.

National treasures such as our four engrossments of Magna Carta or the Gough Map will be protected in the 'Fort Knox of vaults', executed to the British Standard for the storage of archival collections.

The south façade on Broad Street will become a portal to the Blackwell Hall, an atrium leading to two exhibition galleries, an auditorium, a café, and spaces for literary, musical, and other cultural events that currently must be deflected to locations outside the Libraries. Above ground will be the sanctuary for those using the special collections for research or teaching, and for curatorial staff and the conservation laboratories.

The renovation has been warmly embraced, and it also enjoys financial support. A £25 million start-up fund offered by Oxford University Press was increased by £25 million from the Garfield Weston Foundation and £5 million from Julian Blackwell (1950, Trinity College). Additional donations, including funds from the Dunard Fund to name the Music Reading Room in honour of Sir Charles Mackerras, and £1 million of Dr Polonsky's gift to support the digital imaging studio, have brought total funds pledged or in hand to £62 million. With almost five years until we formally re-open the Weston Library, we are confident that our world-wide community of friends will contribute to make this a reality.

In the meantime, we will be barcoding six million volumes, re-locating almost 200 staff members, moving ten million volumes, and trying to keep our library services available without missing a beat. It is a tall order, but the positive feedback we get from those who use our collections and services keeps us motivated. After all, that is why we are here.

If you would like to know more about what's happening with the transformation of the New Bodleian, please visit our website – www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk – and click on the 'Building projects' link.

Major forthcoming exhibitions at the Bodleian

- *'My Wit was always working': John Aubrey and the Development of Experimental Science* (28 May – 31 October)
- *Shelley's Ghost: Reshaping the Image of a Literary Family* (4 December 2010 – 27 March 2011, TBC)
- *Manifold Greatness: Oxford and the Making of the King James Bible* (22 April – 4 September 2011)



How you can help support the Bodleian Libraries

I am constantly uplifted by the expressions of goodwill, and their practical demonstration through the donations we receive, from Oxford alumni and friends of the Bodleian all over the world. All gifts, whatever their size, are a wonderful contribution to nurturing this world-class institution.

We welcome your support, and I would be delighted to hear from you of ways in which you think you might be able to make a difference to the Bodleian Libraries. You can find out how to make a donation to the Libraries through the University's Oxford Thinking campaign website: www.giving.ox.ac.uk/bodleian. Or, alternatively, you can let us know how you can help by using the enclosed form.

Your comments and advice are always of interest. It is a real pleasure to receive your emails and letters. I do hope that when you return to Oxford you will visit the Bodleian – whether to research, to engage with a masterclass, or to enjoy one of our exhibitions – and we shall have opportunity to talk in person.

Sincerely yours,

Sarah E. Thomas
Bodley's Librarian

For further information, please contact:

E: development@bodleian.ox.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)1865 611552

Alternatively, you can sign up to the Bodleian's news and events email list using the enclosed update form.

STOP PRESS!

One of the Bodleian's four engrossments of Magna Carta was caught up in the travel disruption caused by volcanic ash – and New Yorkers are the beneficiaries.

The 1217 Magna Carta was transported to New York in April to be exhibited as the centrepiece of the North America Reunion of University of Oxford alumni in New York, the first time it had left Britain since it was issued 800 years ago. As it had to stay in the USA for longer owing to cancelled flights, the Bodleian and The Morgan Library in New York arranged for it to go on public display until 30 May.

Richard Ovenden, Keeper of Special Collections at the Bodleian Library, who is accompanying Magna Carta in New York, says: "We realised that a public exhibition was the silver lining to this particular ash cloud."



Oxford Thinking

The Campaign for the University of Oxford

