

Philosophy & Theology Faculties Library – Collection location and weeding strategy

The respective roles of the theology collections in the Bodleian Library and in the Philosophy & Theology Faculties Library are articulated in the Collection Development Policy Statement for Theology <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ptfl/theology/theology-collection-development-policy> .

Books located in the PTFL are generally those required for provision of the University's taught courses, both undergraduate and graduate, although they will of course often be of interest to researchers as well.

Members of the PTFL may also have books delivered to the library from the Bodleian's Book storage Facility at Swindon. This holds little-used material from the Bodleian's reference collections as well as less-popular lending stock transferred there from PTFL and from other lending collections of the Bodleian Libraries. Books are ordered via SOLO and there is a daily delivery to PTFL. This enables those working in the library to call on a far wider range of research material, and makes possible a strategy of transfers of little-used material to the BSF, rather than a strategy of regular discards.

At the time of the move of the two separate libraries, Philosophy and Theology, into Radcliffe Humanities, it was apparent that the size of the collection would need to be reduced to fit the new space. A reduction of 20% in the total collection, and a split of the remaining 80% between open shelf access in the PTFL and Automatic Stack Request (from the BSF) was achieved, applying the following principles:

1. Disposal of duplicate print periodical runs where
 - a. The Bodleian retained a print set
 - b. There was electronic availability
2. Disposal of surplus duplicate print books, as a result of the merging of the two collections or where demand had reduced over time.
3. Transfer to the BSF of "last lending copy" where usage figures indicated that readers had accessed the book never, very infrequently, or not at all in the last 10 years.
4. Transfer to the Bodleian of any unique print journals, to be located in the Gladstone link or the BSF according to demand and electronic availability
5. Transfer to BSF of large series of primary texts, where:
 - a. A print set remained in the Lower Reading Room
 - b. There was electronic availability
 - c. The ex-TFL volumes were transferred to the BSF and retained their borrowing status

Once the move was completed, the combined collection totalled c.48,282 (from 59,646), with 58% located on the open shelves and 42% located at the BSF.

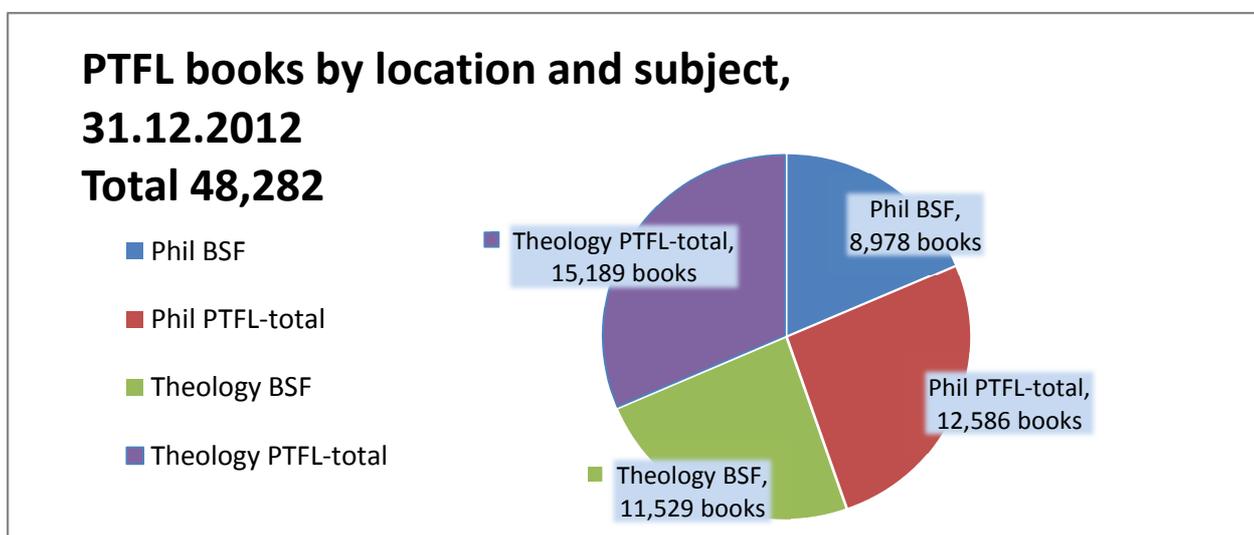


Figure 1

The PTFL shelving allocation is finite – in that there are no obvious opportunities to expand. The “temporary” nature of the library’s presence in Radcliffe Humanities is another contra-indication for expansion on site. The library has been full from its opening, technically overfull, since several thousand books are out on loan at any time. A standard calculation on book capacity to shelving availability indicates the library should accommodate 25,000 books. The collection total for PTFL (excluding BSF) was 26,669 in December 2012, and is now at 29,270. Each year, the library acquires c. 1,500-2,000 new books, which should be balanced by the discard or transfer of an equivalent number. This was the policy at the two previous libraries, but sufficient stack space had existed to avoid the imperative of regular discards. The 2012 programme of discards and transfers was in a sense a catching-up process, returning both libraries to steady-state.

From 2013, a weeding programme has been in operation to keep the library within its steady-state. The weeding strategy is based on the principles articulated at the time of the move, with selection being based on usage (or lack of it rather), reduction in multiple copies where electronic surrogates have demonstrably reduced the pressure on print, and a combination of transfers of items to the BSF and discards, following the principle that the last lending copy should never be discarded.

Usage figures are generally the most reliable basis on which to select items for discard or transfer. “Cold Lists” are generated by technical staff in the OLIS team, derived from circulation data, going back to 2000. These identify, for each book in the collection, when we acquired it, how many loans it has accrued, and when the most recent loan occurred. With these to guide selection, in 2013-4, 1,093 books have been transferred to the BSF, and 27 discarded. The main selection criterion has been of those books which have not been borrowed at all since 2008. Some of the older books have also been transferred on the basis of less than 10 loans from 2000-present, of which none took place in 2013-4. All selections are assessed individually. Sets have generally been excluded, unless the entire set meets the above criteria.

While the library remains in Radcliffe Humanities, regular weeding will be part of stock management, together with removal of dilapidated items or superseded editions. It is hoped that the “5 year 0 loan” concept will suffice to keep the library at steady-state. If not, then we may need to consider reducing from 5 years 0 loans to 4, or opening a conversation on whether parts of the collection could be relocated to other lending libraries, such as OIL.

For reassurance, it should be noted that books held at the BSF are easily ordered back to PTFL and may be borrowed. In 2012-3, [waiting for number] books were borrowed from the BSF PTFL collection. There are also review processes for books which have been transferred to the BSF, and subsequently prove to be in greater demand than anticipated. In 2014, 3 books have been transferred back to the open shelves.

Since the move, it is harder to separate out theology and philosophy books when looking at statistics. Figure 2 shows the current split between BSF and open shelves, but does not track the subject split.

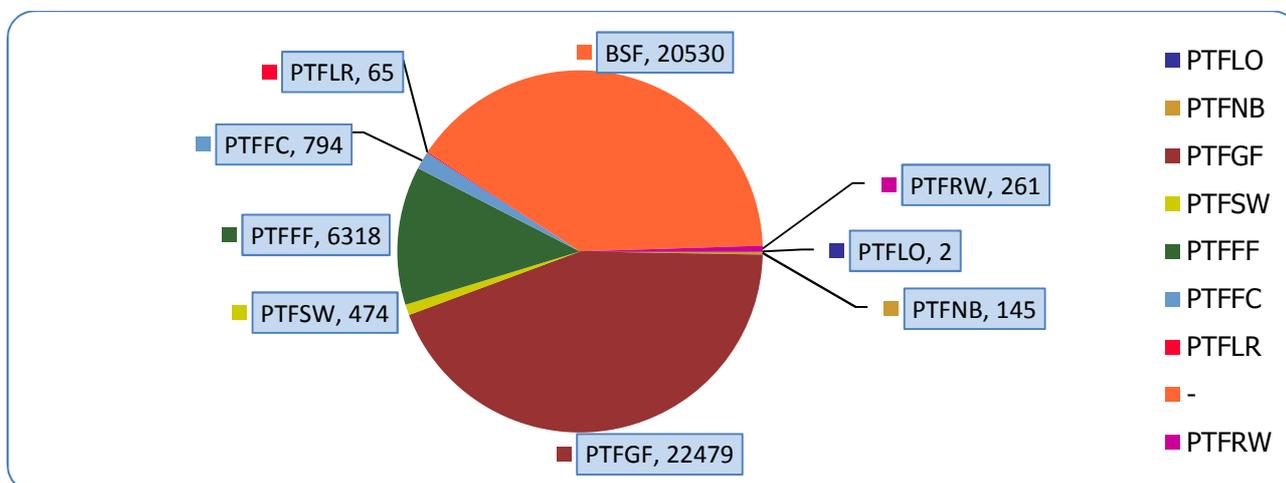


Figure 2