



NEW COLLEGE RECORD

2025

*Et... nonam
...re... ex... te... rel... f... cas...*



EN
SU
RA
M
CA
RI
TA

non habet: et impatientia nescit
modum: et desiderium nō sustinet: un̄
et nos oblite uirum nostraruz: et nō qd
possumus: sed quid uelimus tantū cogitā
tes: magistra cupim⁹ tocere uisapule: et
ut est uulgare ^{gwarri} puerbui ^{id est sus capre dicit unneruā} sul artū retri
ces: tu que prima ^{est dea sapiencie et artū regere} santilla, nostro fomiti
subiecasti: que ad hoc studiū noi ^{et sermone} ortata es

*ne hui⁹ pnbq
esta letis lita
ruffini folio. x*



The Librarian writes . . .



The return to New College of a magnificent, 15th-century illuminated Florentine manuscript copy of the Letters of St Jerome, missing for centuries, sounds like a fairytale—but that is indeed what happened in January. First bequeathed to the library by College Scholar and Fellow, Andrew Holes (*d.* 1470), Royal Proctor to the Papal Curia, the manuscript dates from around 1440, and comprises 368 leaves of vellum, and is virtually complete. Its illuminated gold and coloured initials, with white

interlaced vine-stem decoration (*bianchi girari*), are the work of a painter (or painters) of huge talent, and have been beautifully executed using very fine materials. A spectacular opening blue-framed initial ‘M’, in quite flawless gold, is filled with delicate pinky-brown and green colours, featuring a *putto* (cherub), a charmingly painted butterfly, and a bright golden vase from which entangling vine stems emanate. This is the image illustrating the front cover of this year’s *Record*. Purloined from college most likely in the 16th or early 17th century, by at least 1690 the manuscript was held in the Mostyn family’s Gloddaeth Library in Wales. It passed through the hands of several rare books dealers, Sotheby’s, Maggs Bros., Christie’s, and Bernard Rosenthal, before book history scholar and librarian at the British Library, Nicolas Barker, purchased it. Subsequently an erased inscription in the manuscript, revealed through ultraviolet photography, indicated Andrew Holes’s ownership, and thereafter, thanks to the great generosity of Nicolas Barker, and the good offices of our Warden, Miles Young, it was donated and restored to New College. It has now become our MS 384, our foremost manuscript acquisition in recent years. You can read more about it in the college’s sister publication *New College Notes* (www.new.ox.ac.uk/restitution-st-jerome-new-college-libraris-ms-384).

The generosity of New College friends and alumni, the energy and expertise of library and archives staff, and the richness of our collections continue to stimulate donations to the library and archives. This year has been a bumper year for gifts generally, and I am most grateful to the 80+ individuals and organisations who have donated financial gifts and collections items to us in 2025, including sizeable book gifts from both Professor Karen Leeder and Dr Ros Temple. Overall, this year we added 2,083 items to the library’s printed book collections, a modest 9.5% increase on last year’s 1,903. Our collection continues to be very heavily used by students and academics. The number of book renewals increased a little this year, though overall borrowing dropped 5.5% from 30,904 items in 2024



The New College Warden (right) returning MS 384 to the Librarian (left)

to 29,191. This equates to a figure representing 41.7% of our entire modern book collection actively used in one year, suggesting the appropriateness of the selection of titles we hold, and the return on investment of our entire book stock. Notable this year was the growing popularity of the library's auxiliary borrowing services for equipment (chargers, adapters, DVD drives) that we loan out to students. Service improvements in 2025 have included an upgrade of our Bibliotheca borrowing machines, carried out smoothly and without disruption to users. A timely upgrade saved college money, and proved an exemplar to some other college libraries, while others had to resort to buying new kit entirely. Our digitisation programme to provide high-quality digital surrogates of our internationally significant manuscripts collection made good progress, with digitising of ten more medieval manuscripts now completed. The environmental monitoring and control system for our strongrooms in the Bell Tower is approaching 30 years old; such an age is often considered to be approaching the outer limit of a plant's effectiveness. So, it is timely for college to give thought to implementing improvements or commissioning a replacement. Nevertheless, it was heartening to read in an external environment and systems review of the college that in relation to the care of our special collections of extraordinary high monetary value 'there is exemplary curatorial practice', with staff 'generally being attentive and careful'.

Exhibitions we staged this year included library treasures for members of the Grolier Club, New York (a major American bibliophiles society), one for a delegation of Chilean visitors, one to accompany the Open Day for Parents and Guardians of our Freshers, another for the

Freshers themselves, one for pupils of New College School (focusing on the theme of space and the solar system), and another for the college's Hong Kong summer school students. We also put on four large-scale exhibitions. Two were the most recent in our series (instituted 2018) of subject-themed library exhibitions, namely *The Art of the Book*, showcasing illumination, illustration, fine bindings, and private press books, and *Babel: Arabic, Hebrew, and Languages of the Levant*, featuring manuscripts dating from the 10th century onwards, incunables, and other early printed items. The latter we hosted to accompany the college's Margoliouth Symposium of 13 November, organised by Margoliouth Fellow in Arabic, Dr Christian C. Sahner, celebrating the return of Arabic as an undergraduate subject to the college. We also put on two separate exhibitions as contributions to the city's annual Oxford Festival of the Arts. *Magnificent Oxford*, our most popular of the year attracting 238 visitors in one day, featured beautiful illuminated parchment, maps, and printed engravings, and for *Magnificent Monarchs* we displayed medieval documents, seals, and signatures. To mark the Feast of St Thomas on 13 December, we showed archival items relating to food and drink—our menu cards, wine accounts, and the like. For a visit of the Association of Jewish Refugees in February, we exhibited some of our Jewish manuscripts and early printed books, and at the unveiling by the Belgian Ambassador of a plaque in New College Lane in April, we displayed newsprint, photographic, and documentary materials relating to the college's reception of First World War Belgian refugees. In addition, we have staged various small 'pop-up' displays for show-and-tell and similar activities, and displays in the library entrance hall. The archivist's walk-and-talk tours and the library's student welfare initiatives and special collections handling workshops continued to be popular throughout the year.

The library published as planned two issues of *New College Notes* (www.new.ox.ac.uk/new-college-notes), the college's scholarly e-journal, re-established as a twice-yearly publication back in 2018, focusing on our history and rich collections, and building into an ever more useful body of commentary and research on our institution. Twenty articles appeared on, among other things, some of the most important early printed book and archival documents acquired for the collections over the course of the year. These include volumes by 16th-century Catholic theologians and college alumni Nicholas Sander and Thomas Stapleton, a Winchester College parchment Long Roll of 1733, 17th- to 19th-century imprints by New College poets with notable manuscript insertions and associations, archival documents and printed materials by college novelists including A. P. Herbert and John Fowles, letters by other famous alumni, Warden William Spooner and Duff Cooper, and a range of 20th-century publications

relating to New College, generally rare and hard to come by. Alongside the spectacular manuscript of St Jerome, another standout acquisition was a fine post-incunabulum with a very telling provenance, the most notable early printed book the library has purchased for some time: Sigebert of Gembloux's *Chronicon* in its 1513 Paris imprint, bearing the ownership signature and annotations of alumnus and theologian Thomas Stapleton (1535–1598).

The most recent in our popular video series *Curators' Choice*, excellently delivered by our outgoing curatorial assistant Dr Jessica Hendy-Hodgkinson, promoted our late 13th-century copy of the *Rota Nova*, or 'New Wheel', one of only four manuscript copies of the work which survive, and the most complete text of the work and earliest surviving copy as well. A beautifully presented, well-researched online *New College Through Time* exhibition (www.new.ox.ac.uk/new-college-through-time/welcome), expertly co-ordinated by Deputy Librarian Will Shire, has also been launched. Drawing upon the outstanding collections in our library and archives to give an insight into college life over the centuries, and including interactive elements, it ranges from our medieval origins to the opening last year of the Gradel Quadrangles.

We put on two physical exhibitions in the upper reading room cases of the library. 'Cyril Hare (1900–1958)—Murder Mystery Novelist' was about a leading figure of the golden age of detective fiction, and one of New College's most popular authors, Alfred Alexander Gordon Clark, who gained a first here in Modern History. Alongside his high-powered legal and civil service career he wrote fiction under a penname constructed from the addresses of his Battersea home, Cyril Mansions, and his barristers' chambers, Hare Court. We were delighted to welcome to the library his daughter, the Pugin scholar Alexandra, Lady Wedgwood, and several of his grandchildren. The other exhibition was on one of the most influential American artists of the 20th century: 'Edward Gorey (1925–2000)—An Anniversary Exhibition' has proved to be our most visited exhibition in cases to date. This fine collection of Gorey materials was donated to the library by the New College alumnus and financier David Mann (1935–2012). The subject of another library donation, this time one from the 18th century, a copy of our famous 'Vinegar Bible' (1716–17) given by our alumnus Bishop Robert Lowth as a memorial to his son, provided the image of the Adoration of the Magi for the college's beautiful Christmas card this year.

I am pleased to record my gratitude to outgoing Warden, Miles Young, who has championed the library and supported our endeavours in so many ways during my librarianship. In July our 16th-century 'Admissions of Wardens' archival box, normally kept in the Muniment Tower, had a starring role in chapel, serving as a ballot box for the election

of the new Warden. The library is looking forward very much to working with Sir Robin Niblett KCMG from September 2026.

Christopher Skelton-Foord – Librarian



19th-century gilt vellum binding of MS 384—featuring inlaid mosaic-patterned triangles and lozenges in green and red calfskin, with a gilt-tooled border of similarly panelled alternating green and red

Donors Giving Collection Items and Financial Gifts to the Library 2025

- All Souls College Library
- Mr Philip Arathoon
- Ms Sue Ashcroft-Jones
- Mr Andrew J G Banks
- Professor J Batchelor
- Ms Charlie Batori
- Bodleian Library Publishing
- Ms Jo Bowd
- Professor S Bright
- Ms Geraldine Brooks, AO
- Sir Stephen J L Bubb
- Ms Iris Julia Bührle
- Mr Allan E Bulley III
- Professor M Burden
- Ms Georgia de Chamberet
- Christ Church Library
- Corpus Christi College Library
- Dr Jennifer Crane
- Mr John Davies
- Mr Martin Davis
- Ms Rachael Davis-Featherstone
- Dr P Deb
- Mr Pablo Dubois
- Mr Gerry Eaton
- Dr Richard Foster
- Ms Suzanne Foster
- Mrs Sarah Fowles
- Mr Patrick Gale
- The Revd Dr Lee Gatiss
- Mr Bertrand Gibert
- Mr R Gullifer
- Professor V Halbach
- Professor Jonathon L Hart
- Dr C Jeremy Harvey
- Dr Barbara B Haws
- Professor M Husain
- Professor Ludmilla J Jordanova
- Mr R J Lane Fox
- Mr Peter J Larkham
- Professor K Leeder
- Professor J L Lightfoot
- Mr Scott D Little
- The Revd Dr E Longfellow
- Professor Bernhard F Malkmus
- Dr Remus Gabriel Manoilă
- Mansfield College Library
- Ms Julia Marshall
- Professor Mairi McLaughlin
- Professor Darrin M McMahon
- Professor A R Meadows
- Dr M Melfi
- Mr J W Morgan
- Dr A Morrison
- Mr Yusuf Naeem
- Mr Rajendra Prasad Narla
- Dr John A Oddy
- Mr Michael I Ohajuru
- Professor R C T Parker
- Professor D Parrott
- Parson Woodforde Society
- Dr David C Pearson
- Philosophy and Theology Faculties Library
- Professor Olivier Poncet
- Mr Terence M Russell
- Professor A J Ryan
- Dr C C Sahner
- Mr Tony D Sanderson
- Dr C J Skelton-Foord
- Mr Arthur Snell
- Somerville College Library
- St Antony's College Library
- St Hilda's College Library
- Mrs Carla Stanley
- Dr Frederick Stocken
- Mr Ian Sturton
- Taylor Institution Library
- Dr R A M Temple
- Professor C J Tyerman
- Alexandra Mary, Lady Wedgwood
- Professor M Williams
- Wolfson College Library
- Warden Miles Young



*Dr Christopher Skelton-Foord,
the College Librarian*



*Freyja Madsen, the College
Academic Registrar until the
end of 2025*