

THE LIBRARY: LOOKING BACK, 1995-1800

Agnes Neligan

Catholic seminary and religious libraries in Ireland, with a few notable exceptions, are almost invisible institutions and their collections are largely unknown. An occasional photograph or a mention in passing in their institutions' history is all the information readily available. The library at Maynooth, because of the status of the college as national seminary, pontifical university and recognised college of the National University of Ireland, has fared better. The two government commissions¹ which inquired in some detail into the administration of the college in the nineteenth century give an interesting insight into the functioning of the library in the early years. Several passing travellers give brief glimpses of it and there is a whole chapter on the library in the centenary history of the college.²

Twentieth-century information is gleaned mainly from the minutes and documentation of the Library Committee, which, until the 1950s, were usually brief accounts of purchases and expenditure. Three periodical articles give comprehensive accounts of the library history, collections, rare books and buildings.³ Denis Meehan has a chapter on the library in his book *Window on Maynooth*.⁴ Having been an enclosed institution until the 1960s, outside glimpses are rare though scholars as well as visitors were beginning to use the library. John Sheehan, writing in 1960 of his student days, gives an evocative description: 'occasionally, outsiders come along to take notes; priest-historians to garner hitherto unpublished matter for their prospective diocesan histories; Irish scholars to collect and collate variant readings of Gaelic poems; scientists in search of some information concerning the distinguished Dr Nicholas Callan⁵ whose research and experiments made possible so much that we now take for granted in the domain of electricity'.⁶

The surviving library records are not extensive. Apart from the Library Committee minute books there are two copies of the first library catalogue from the 1820s and various registers recording loans, purchases and donations. Owing largely to the lack of any

full-time library staff until 1951 there is an absence of any correspondence files or other records dealing with the day-to-day administration of the library.

*Divisional
libraries*

From its beginning in 1800 until 1966 the library at Maynooth fulfilled the role of a typical seminary library. The modern seminary dates from the Council of Trent (1545–63) and the role of the library was acknowledged from the beginning. St Charles Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, who founded some of the early seminaries and expanded on the decrees of the Council, recognised the traditional place of a library in clerical education. He ruled that a ‘fixed place should be decided on in the seminary for a library, where all volumes and books should be kept’. He gave detailed regulations regarding the cataloguing of books, the duties of a librarian, the care of books and lending arrangements.⁷ The most comprehensive rules on seminary libraries were given by A. M. Micheletti, consultor of the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, in 1918 when he stated anew the important position of the library and gave suggestions, norms and regulations. One of the features of seminary libraries was the additional provision of divisional or student libraries. Micheletti recommended separate libraries for seminarians and professors.⁸ Pius XI, in 1931, while recommending libraries for students also stressed the need for students to be protected ‘from danger either of wasting time uselessly or from suffering loss of faith or morals’.⁹

Maynooth followed this pattern, divisional libraries being provided for students with restricted access to the library itself. The 1820 college statutes restricted access to professors and to students who had been four years in the college.¹⁰ The evidence given at the 1826 commission shows that this rule was adhered to. Bartholomew Crotty, president of Maynooth, reported that 170 students were ‘in the general habit of resorting to the library’, but he clearly felt the rule was adequate as he stated that even after four years’ residence ‘men of ordinary talents may have sufficient to do in studying the works in their hands . . .’.¹¹ Finding the time to use the library was also a problem as the students were occupied attending or preparing for class and the library was opened for only four hours each day.

It was the Dunboyne, or postgraduate, students who made

most use of the library, they, like the professors, having free access at all hours. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century these were the only readers allowed. By then the students no longer had general permission to read in the library. John Healy gives the following reason: 'owing to want of funds the college is able to allow only one servant for library purposes; hence, if the students were freely admitted to read, they should be afforded free access to the shelves, to take books and replace them for themselves. This would, of necessity, lead to confusion; and would, besides injuring the books, soon render the catalogue quite useless. Hence it has been found impracticable to admit the great body of the students to the large library.'¹² Walter McDonald, prefect of the Dunboyne scholars and librarian, comments on this attitude in his reminiscences when recalling how, as a student, the librarian, Robert French Whitehead, refused him permission to use the library: 'there are some people who love books so much that they do not like to see them used; and it was, I fancy, by some feeling such as this that Dr Whitehead was moved to preserve the Library from the profanation of being used by a mere student'.¹³

The majority of students were restricted to the use of the divisional or student libraries, the largest of which, St Mary's, survived until 1984. The 1853 commission report gives a good, if confusing, picture of the student libraries in the mid-nineteenth century. Patrick Murray, professor of theology, stated that there was no library for junior students; Denis Gargan, professor of humanity, stated that there was a select library accessible to the humanity students, though he had not been in it since he was a student; and Charles Russell, professor of ecclesiastical history, claimed that nearly 90 students were without any library facilities. John O'Hanlon, the librarian, reported that there was a small library for the classes of humanity, rhetoric and logic but that in 1845 the books had had to be moved to the college library. Laurence Gillic, professor of sacred scripture, said: 'when I was a student there was a very scanty library, to which the students were allowed access on every rainy Wednesday, when there were no walks . . .'.¹⁴

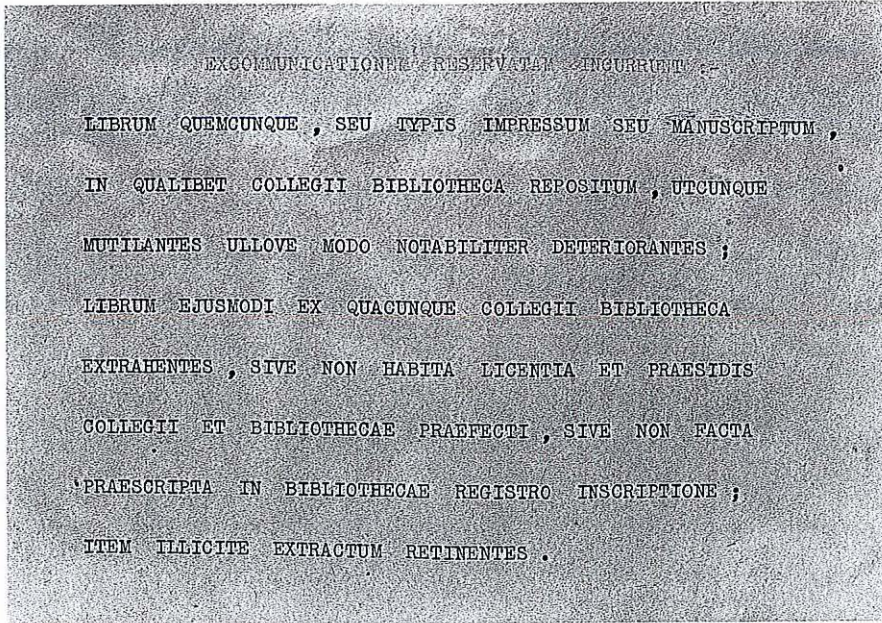
At their largest these libraries never contained more than a few thousand volumes. In 1895 there were 8,000 volumes between the three junior libraries. Almost 50 years later, in 1943, this number had risen to 11,000. Over the years, however, they provided a

valuable service to the students and are dealt with kindly in a number of reminiscences. Don Boyne in *I remember Maynooth*, published in 1937, recalls: 'in the smaller libraries of the Junior House and St Mary's I felt more at home. These were not so pretentious, but they had on their shelves a number of old favourites. The atmosphere was not filled with study, one could be at leisure . . . But the big library wore a sterner face: besides it was a place for the few. I know if I venture in there now, these few, sitting at long tables in the centre will raise worried and critical faces as soon as I have made that sharp metallic noise with the door-latch, which, try how I would, I could never restrain.'¹⁵

While professors and postgraduate students could borrow, with permission, from the library, other students could not borrow from any of the libraries. In the 1940s summer vacation loans were allowed for honours B.A. students, but borrowing as of right was not extended to all students until 1979. Unauthorised removal of books from the library was deemed a very grave offence worthy of reserved excommunication, as the notice on the library door warned. This notice, also a feature in other seminaries, lists in Latin the offences which would incur reserved excommunication: 'Mutilating any book whether printed or manuscript deposited anywhere in the College Library or damaging it noticeably in any way; removing such a book by whatever way from the College Library either without the permission of the College President or the Librarian or without having it entered into the Library register, likewise retaining what was removed illegally'.

*Library
buildings*

Brewer gives a description of the original library in 1818: 'the Library, which is properly placed in a retired part of the additional buildings, is a neat and eligible but not extensive apartment . . .'.¹⁶ The 1853 commission report gives the dimensions of the library as 143ft 6in. by 35ft—the largest room in the college.¹⁷ Denis Meehan discusses the location of this room and subsequent libraries until the first library proper was built in 1853 as part of the new Pugin buildings.¹⁸ It was furnished and opened in 1861 and remained the main college library until 1984. Pugin's original estimate of £4,000 to fit up the new library was too expensive, and the interior was completed by the Irish architect J.J. McCarthy for £1,000. Between 1861 and 1984 all the rooms beneath the library



room were gradually annexed to house the expanding collection, and other rooms around the college were acquired for storage and office space. In 1949 a report to the trustees recommended that 'a possible remodelling would be the removal of the present Library floor and the refurnishing of the interior from the ground floor with galleried steel bookstacks, keeping an open well in the middle'.¹⁹ Fortunately this was not done and the library remains substantially unchanged since 1861. The tall bookcases were halved in the 1930s. Lighting was first introduced in 1970, and the bookcases which had belonged to Cardinal Newman and which came from the Catholic University in Dublin were erected in 1984.

The first lay students to attend the college in 1966 were diploma students in education. They were given a small lending library of multiple copies. Subsequently, as the number of lay students increased, Junior Library was expanded as an undergraduate library. Collections were divided and books moved amongst the various libraries in a vain attempt to satisfy the new demands for student textbooks. A student library was provided in the Arts Block which opened in 1976 and Junior Library became home for the new Computer Centre. In 1978 a preliminary report on a new college library noted that the library was located in nine separate

areas between storerooms, offices and three service points—the Main Library, St Mary's and the Arts Block. The Maynooth College Development Fund was established in 1979 to generate funds for the college from the private sector in the United States and Ireland. The provision of a new library building was its first priority, and £2.3 million was collected by May 1981. The willingness shown in donating money for the library proved how right Walter McDonald was when he suggested that money could be collected for the centenary of the college and invested as a library endowment. Encountering local resistance, he maintained his stance, recalling in his reminiscences: 'few, however, had any interest in our library, so my appeal was little heeded. I was told, that, whereas we should get fifteen thousand pounds for a tower and spire, we should not get one-fifth of the sum for a library endowment. I did not think this true, and am still of the same opinion'.²⁰

The site chosen for the new library was between the old and new campuses, an attractive and tranquil setting with mature trees beside the Lyreen river, which was redirected to make space for the new building. On 18 April 1981, Foundation Sunday, the anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the college in April 1795, the president of Ireland, Patrick Hillary, laid the new library foundation stone. Placed under the stone was a copper box containing a set of coins, copies of deeds of the college, plans of the library, penal rosary beads from the museum, and a newspaper of the day. The building was officially opened on 7 October 1984. It was named the John Paul II Library as the foundation stone had been blessed by the pope on his visit to Maynooth in 1979. The old library reverted to its role as a reference and research library, retaining the rare book, manuscript and pre-1850 collections, and was renamed the Russell Library after Charles Russell, a former president of the college who had donated his valuable collection of books to the library. The new library was designed to cater for a student population of 3,000 and, being privately funded, was fitted out with all the luxury denied the Pugin building. Both libraries, however, are worthy buildings in their own right.

*Library
finances*

The first college statute concerning the prefect of the library states: 'in vain would wisdom itself endeavour to promote learning by the enactment of laws, unless a store of books,



The library in the 1940s. Photograph from the college archives (B6/8/4).

whence instruction is to be derived, be supplied and carefully preserved . . .'.²¹ The original 'store of books' was the personal library of Andrew Dunne, later purchased by the college for £500. Dr Dunne held variously the offices of librarian, president and secretary of the Board of Trustees. He was a Dublin man whose father was a merchant and therefore rather better off than many priests of that time, including the Maynooth staff, whose salaries were miserable then. As was usual with many other libraries, the collection was subsequently built up through similar purchases of collections and through donations and bequests.

While large sums were occasionally expended on the purchase of expensive items or collections, until the 1970s the annual grant was small and precluded any systematic development of the collection. Considering the poverty of the college until 1845 it is perhaps remarkable that there was any library. An annual allocation of £20 was introduced by the trustees in 1822, and this was still the notional sum in 1892 as recorded by Douglas Hyde in his brief diary entry on Maynooth: 'the annual income is about £15000,

but they buy only £20 worth of books. Three sheep are killed every day, and the students are well fed'.²² It was evident too in the 1853 commission report; so in fact for most of the nineteenth century there was no regular income. The librarian, John O'Hanlon, reported that he had urged several of the trustees to make a sum of between two and three hundred pounds available every year shortly after the increase of the college grant in 1845. However, the bursar, 'stating that he was willing to advance any reasonable amount of funds which the Librarian or President might demand for the purchase of books [said] it was not deemed necessary to make any law or regulation on the subject'.²³ It is impossible to know whether this arrangement worked to the benefit of the library. The financial decline of the college after its disendowment in 1870 was further reflected in the library. It was not until 1896 that an annual sum of £50 was made available by the trustees and a Library Committee was formed to administer the selection of books. From then on the minutes of this committee record the library finances and purchases in some detail, as well as the effects of college developments on the library.

One of the first major developments recorded was the establishment of the Royal University, which was noted by the committee on 21 November 1907. It was agreed to ask the trustees to sanction a special grant as a 'good deal of money would be needed yearly, in future, as far as one could judge . . .'. It took almost another thirty years before the grant was finally increased to £300 in 1936. It was not until then also that the division of the funds between university and seminary was first discussed. The meeting of 6 November 1935 decided that the money should be expended 'equally generously for both'. The sums available were further depleted by the divisional or student libraries, which proliferated from the early years until 1984. Very often half the budget was absorbed by these libraries. In November 1923 the Library Committee records that the old arrangement for dividing the budget was to be continued: '1/2 College Library; 1/3 St Mary's; 1/6 Junior'.

Various means of economising were resorted to. The early meetings of the committee discussed the purchase of the *Dictionary of national biography*, which then cost £50.0.0. At the meeting of 9 May 1901 the librarian reported that he was in com-

munication with someone who could get it for £35.0.0. Economy, however, did not preclude the final purchase of the morocco-bound edition. In 1900 a set of the *Kilkenny Archaeological Society Journal* was offered for £25.0.0. The librarian was instructed at the February meeting 'to begin by offering £20.0.0 and to give the sum demanded if the book cannot be got cheaper'. Some institutions supplied their publications free: the November meeting of 1927 records that the librarian was asked 'to request the Free State Minister of Industry and Commerce to forward free copies of the Parliamentary debates in Dail Eireann and Seanad'. These were duly forwarded as requested. Sales of duplicates provided another welcome source of income. Generous donations, particularly from the Maynooth Union, paid for expensive items such as *Monumenta Germaniae historica* and the Mansi edition of the Church councils.

Periodicals, once they were allowed at the end of the nineteenth century, posed a financial problem which has not been resolved even today. In the early years of the twentieth century students contributed one shilling each towards their cost. Cancellation of subscriptions became another means of economy. A report to the trustees in 1950 records the end result: 'at the moment there is not a single complete set of a single standard periodical of theology or canon law in the Library'.²⁴ The amount of the budget spent on books and periodicals respectively became a problem. The minutes of a meeting held on 2 October 1956 could easily be a record of a 1994 meeting. They note that after periodicals about £20.0.0 remained for books, and that 'protests have been received about our cancelling a number of periodicals. Professors complained they are essential for their students and research'. By 1959 only £7.0.0 was available per professor for book purchase, the total budget for that year being £500.

After the college opened its doors to lay students in 1966, a number of *ad hoc* grants were given and the annual budget gradually increased. The development is best summed up by the Library Committee minutes of 26 March 1971: 'we were, in effect, undertaking our own expansion in our own time and within our financial limits'. From the mid-1970s onwards the financial situation improved. By then the nature of the institution the library served had changed utterly, and while the one million

pounds required annually to provide a library service in the mid-1990s would seem like untold riches to past generations it is not nearly adequate to provide all the services required by modern library-users.

An interesting footnote to library finances is that until the 1970s the money was spent exclusively on books, periodicals and binding. As late as 1968 a request for £100 to be spent on furniture was only granted on the understanding that it was not to be a precedent. Harry Fairhurst in his 1975 report notes that there was 'no regular grant for the purchase of sundry supplies and minor items of equipment'.²⁵ At that time there was virtually no equipment in the library. While the Library Committee meeting of 2 April 1903 notes the purchase of a magic lantern which was kept in the library, the first item of equipment actually purchased for the library was a typewriter in 1935. A microfilm reader, now in the museum, was purchased in 1956, another in 1961, and the first photocopier in 1962. These items seem primitive today as they needed training to use and also a special environment, as reported by the librarian to the committee meeting of 14 April 1962. He said that 'the microfilm readers were giving satisfaction but that complete darkness was hard to ensure in the Library'. He suggested that a dark-room was necessary and that this would also suit the 'photocopying apparatus'.

*Library
collection*

Students were obliged to provide their own textbooks, as the provision of textbooks was not seen as a function of the library until the late 1960s. In the early years each student was expected to provide himself 'with Clothes, Books, Bedding and Chamber Furniture; pays for washing, mending, and Candle light for his room'.²⁶ The 1853 commission report gives a more detailed picture of student reading: 'the students may possess as many books as they please for their private reading, subject to the inspection of the deans, whose duty it is to take care that they shall not have any books of an immoral, infidel, or seditious tendency. They are obliged to have the Bible and two or three books of devotion, besides some of the classbooks. The Bursar supplies these to the students at their entrance'.²⁷ As early as 1812 a sum of £1,000 had been allocated to purchase textbooks to sell on to students.

In the early nineteenth century books were in short supply,

Minutes of the
Library Committee
17 November 1910.
Signed by the
librarian, Walter
McDonald, and the
president, Daniel
Mannix.

1910.

17-11.

Present: Mr. Deane, Vice-President, Dr. Morrison,
Dr. O'Connell, Dr. Coffey, Librarian.

The Librarian reported that the books on the disposal
of the Committee for the academic year were, approximately:

College Library - - -	£53.0.0
St. Mary's Po	£2.0.0
Junior House Po	27.0.0

He also presented lists of books for purchase, the lists
having been received from the Magisters and students. The
lists were read over and passed with slight modifica-
tions.

The Vice-President asked whether there was any hope
of our being able to purchase a copy of the Annuaire de
Geneva and the Librarian. The feeling of the Committee was
that we could not begin to purchase from the books on
our disposal under the present arrangement. He was
thoughtful, however, that it would be well to write ap-
plication to their Lordships the Masters for a special
allowance to enable us to procure this important col-
lection of documents. The Librarian was authorized to
write this report in the name of the Committee to
the Board on the ~~next~~ meeting next June.

Walter McDonald
Librarian

being difficult to obtain from the European market. The early catalogue shows that nonetheless most of the books in the library at that time had Continental imprints. The letters of the student Eugene Conwell give an account of how books were bought. In a letter to his uncle dated 31 May 1801, he says that 'some time ago we had an auction of old books belonging to a priest of this Diocese. They amounted to £28 14s and I am certain you would not give 2 Guineas for the two boxes'. He recommends that his uncle purchase the 'unsold effects of Rev. Mr Corr they would sell here readily for 6 or 7 guineas'. He writes again on 28 November 1801: 'I heard that the Library which belonged to the late Dr

Lenon of Newry is to be sent to this house in order to be sold by auction. If they should arrive before yours they will have preference in the sale'. On 30 December 1801 he reports that having auctioned the books sent by his uncle he would be able to send on nine or ten pounds.²⁸ Philip Dowley, dean, reported to the 1826 commission that 'students purchase books in Dublin; there is a person who purchases books for the most part at the public sales which take place in town, which he offers for sale at the Porters lodge'.²⁹ A catalogue of these books was required in advance so that unsuitable items could be withdrawn.

Following the improvement in the college grant in 1845 staff and postgraduate students were considerably better paid and were able to collect substantial personal libraries. Thomas Furlong, professor of theology, whose library was bequeathed to Maynooth in 1993 by the bishop of Ferns, reported to the 1853 commission that, 'having endeavoured to provide myself with nearly all the works which I require in my department, I rarely visit the Library with the view of consulting writers on divinity'.³⁰ Patrick Murray's evidence is similar: 'I rarely enter the public library . . . If I want a book to read or refer to I generally buy it, or borrow it, or do without it'.³¹ Walter McDonald, in his reminiscences, recalls of Patrick Murray that 'he had a fine collection of books, not only on Theology, but on English literature; and he rarely came from Dublin, whither he went every week, without adding to the store'.³²

Students, too, amassed large collections. The librarian, John O'Hanlon, reported to the 1853 commission that several post-graduates 'are provided with handsome private libraries, and that the great majority of them, when finally leaving the College, usually expend from twenty to forty pounds in the purchase of books'.³³ Walter McDonald recalls how students acquired books in the late nineteenth century: 'at that time we used to appoint some students as agents, to deal with the booksellers for books which the agents sold to us; and as those agents were supplied freely, and we had free access to their rooms, while they did not press for payment, we bought books, or borrowed those which had been bought by others'.³⁴

These private collections benefited the library as many of them were eventually bequeathed or sold to the library. However, as

many of the collections were exactly similar the problem of duplication occurred. This was mentioned as early as 1886 and the first sale of duplicates took place in 1918. By 1930 the problem was so acute that total reorganisation of the library became necessary. Duplicate volumes were removed and disposed of by private sale and by mail order to priests and scholars, many of them returning to the library in subsequent bequests. Seán Corkery in his 1985 interview sums up the problem: 'bequests were a headache. I always got them processed in about a month, it meant staying up till about three o'clock in the morning alone in the Library in that end room . . .'.³⁵ Books had to be compared with what was on the shelves. Only exact duplicates were discarded; if they were other editions they were retained. Because of this disposal of duplicates it is not possible now to identify the entire collection of any one person. While the donations book records full details for small bequests, for large bequests it simply gives the number of volumes. The recent donation of Thomas Furlong's books has been retained as a separate collection and gives a more complete picture of the library of an Irish nineteenth-century Catholic theologian.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century comments regarding the library collection were often critical, with more complimentary descriptions being made by passing visitors. Brewer in 1826 gives a typical early description of the library as 'containing numerous theological works, but at present lamentably defective in other classes of literature'.³⁶ The library catalogue of that period gives a different picture. Almost half of the 5,000 titles listed come under the headings *Belles Lettres*, Philosophy (including Science), and History and Biographies, which would seem to be well balanced for a seminary library. By the mid-nineteenth century it is clear from the evidence given at the 1853 commission by the professors that the collection had become outdated in most areas. Charles Russell, professor of ecclesiastical history, stated that the 'College Library although tolerably well supplied with the older standard authors in church history, is utterly unprovided in the modern literature of this department'.³⁷ Daniel McCarthy, professor of rhetoric, stated that, 'up to 1845, owing to the poverty of the college, the Library was not well furnished with the indispensable aids for the prosecution of those studies for which it was even mainly intended; that, since then, great exertion has been made to

remedy this defect'.³⁸

By the end of the nineteenth century, although the library had grown to 40,000 volumes plus 8,000 volumes in three student libraries, the collection was again described as defective. Healy in the centenary history claimed that the library was not up to date in modern literature of any kind and particularly lamented the deficiency of scientific works. The character Duncan, a new student at Maynooth, in Gerald O'Donovan's novel *Father Ralph* makes the following comment, possibly reflecting a student's view of the library: '“Humph”! said Duncan, “not bad as a building. But the books! Would you believe me? Not a single copy of Tennyson. Fusty job lot of theology and philosophy! The only decent books in the place were left by a priest who died many years ago. No books seem to have been bought since. In Clonliff, now, we have all the best modern books”'.³⁹

The president and the librarian were responsible for selecting books for the library during the nineteenth century. Professors could make suggestions, though these were not always accepted. Matthew Kelly, professor of English and French, grudgingly stated in answer to a question in the 1853 report that his suggestions were complied with, 'to some extent, lately'.⁴⁰ George Crolly, professor of theology, recommended that 'a certain sum should be expended on books annually. The selection of books to be purchased should be entrusted to a committee consisting of the President, Librarian, and two professors. I think this arrangement quite essential'.⁴¹ A library committee was eventually formed in 1897 with the president as chairman and the librarian as secretary, and it controlled all library purchases for the next fifty years. Though the committee did not have a clearly stated acquisitions policy, a report to the trustees in 1950 made three enlightened recommendations: 'the maintenance of an efficient research library of ecclesiastical and allied sciences; the building of a collection of unique value in a particular field; the maintenance of some standards of efficiency in the philosophy, arts and science departments'.⁴² Another expanded report went on to make the following comment, which sadly could equally well be written today with the decline in the purchase of theological books in the library: 'It seems desirable that the Church in Ireland should possess at least one library of sufficient size and range to enable satis-



Thomas Furlong (1802–75), whose collection of books was donated to the library in 1993 by the bishop of Ferns on the closure of the House of Missions, Enniscorthy. Oil on canvas, 136cm x 98cm. Maynooth College.

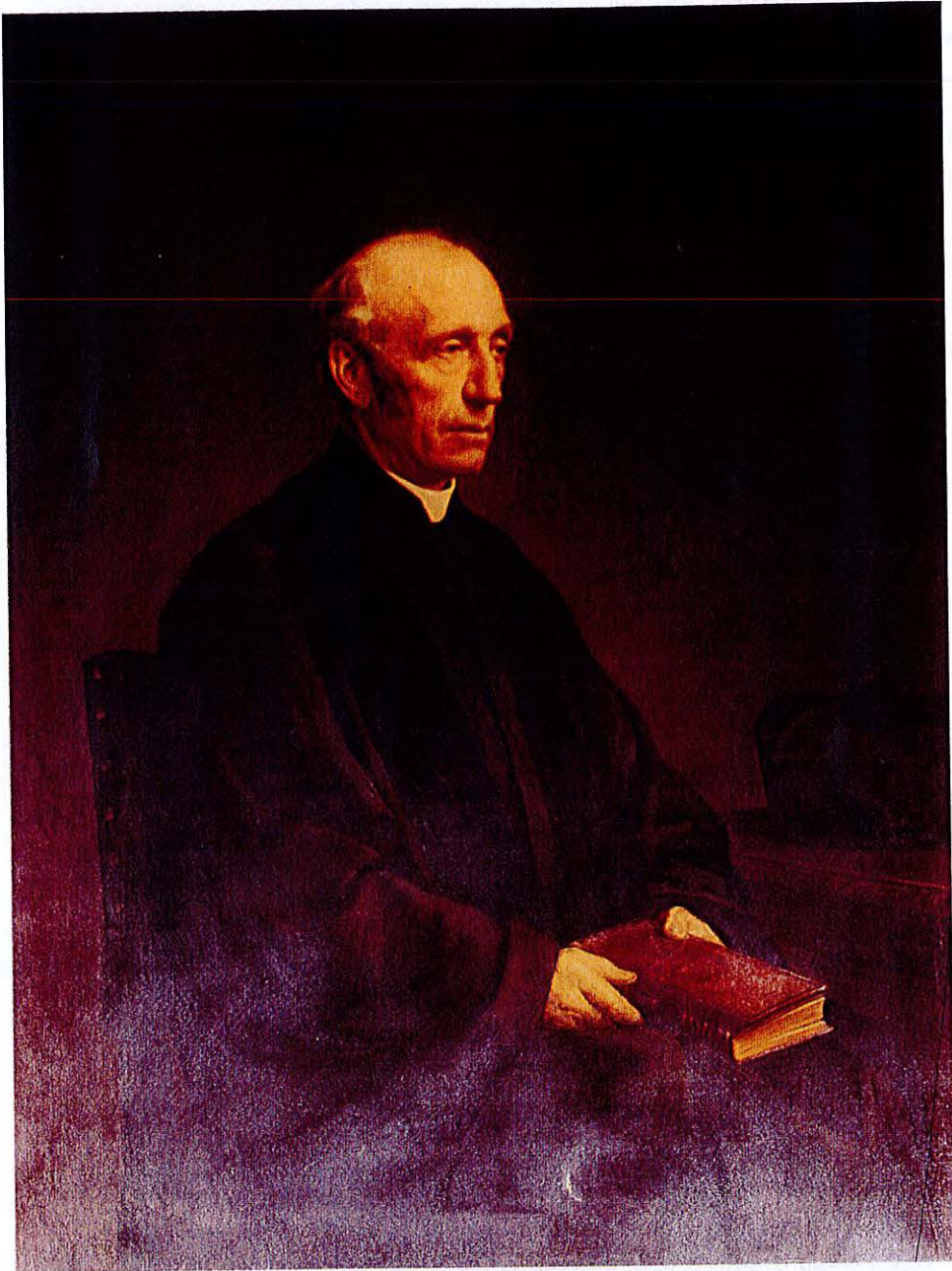
factory research to be made of any theological problem which is likely to arise. The library at Maynooth College is the only one which, in this country, could possibly be brought up to that standard without enormous expense'.⁴³ Once the heart of the library collection, theology and its allied disciplines have in the last twenty years been completely outnumbered by other subjects.

Librarians

The first librarian, Andrew Dunne, was appointed in 1800. Dr Dunne was subsequently president and secretary of the Board of Trustees. From 1823 until 1938 the post was usually held conjointly with that of prefectship of the Dunboyne establishment for postgraduate students. Nine of the nineteen librarians held this post, including two of the longest-serving, John O'Hanlon and Walter McDonald. Two others were vice-presidents, four were professors of theology, and the three most recent holders of the office were finally full-time librarians.

The duties of the librarian until 1951 were supervisory. The work was mostly done by student assistants on a paid basis in the early years and later in a voluntary capacity. The librarian, Nicholas Slevin, in his evidence to the 1826 commission stated that his duty was to superintend the library. His two assistants took care of the library and were responsible for the catalogue, keeping the library in order and keeping 'a watchful eye on the conduct of students'.⁴⁴ Over a hundred years later a report to the trustees in 1950 stated that 'for routine office work, checking and filing of periodicals, registration and cataloguing of books, and general correspondence, a committee of six students has been formed who do part-time work voluntarily'.⁴⁵ The tradition of additionally employing students in the library continues into the 1990s, albeit in a paid capacity.

Apart from the librarian and students, a library servant was also employed, usually on a part-time basis. The Library Committee meeting of 5 November 1934 requested that the servant 'should be relieved of service at the gate, coal weighing and other employment that took him away from library duties'. However, the 1950 report to the trustees noted that 'at present a College servant is the only person permanently present in the Library. He has other house duties, and being utterly unskilled fulfils merely the function of cleaner and janitor. His salary is £1.0.0 per week'.⁴⁶ The possibility of appointing a better-quality servant was considered by the committee on 10 November 1962, when it was suggested employing a rehabilitated patient from a mental institution, as 'such a person would be intelligent enough to be trained in book-binding and the typing of catalogue entries'. The book-binding was obviously attempted as the librarian reported on 20 October 1967 'a disastrous experience with the occupational therapy bindery in a Dublin mental hospital'.



Charles Russell (1812-80), after whom the old library is named. Oil on canvas, 123cm x 93cm. Maynooth College.

In the 1930s an outside librarian, Thomas Wall, was employed in a temporary capacity to re-catalogue the library. The Library Committee meeting of 16 December 1941 records that the typist employed to type the catalogue cards was paid £4.0.0 for four weeks' work. The same meeting records the payment of £4.15.0 for two new library registers. The possibility of appointing a full-time librarian was first discussed by the committee on 15 November 1937. The then librarian, William Moran, stated 'that it was no longer possible to successfully carry on the librarianship as a side line to his professorial duties, and that the only satisfactory solution of the problem is the appointment of a librarian who will have the requisite training and sufficient time to look after the interests of the libraries efficiently. It was agreed, however, that we are very far behind in the matter of library staff and management'. It was fourteen years before a librarian, Seán Corkery, was eventually appointed in 1951. The salary recommended was £575 per annum—not a large sum even then.

The librarian worked mostly on his own until the late 1960s. The minutes of the 27 October 1967 committee meeting described the staff situation: 'one servant opened and closed the Library; and a team was sent in about once a week to clean and polish the floor'. By this time the college had opened its doors to lay students, which not only increased the number of users but brought new demands for library services. The first library assistant was appointed in 1968. Seven years later Harry Fairhurst, in his 1975 report on the library, records six members of staff and recommends an ideal number of 21. Almost twenty years on, the library employs 26 full-time and eleven part-time staff, a number more in keeping with its role as a modern university library.

The catalogue

The 1820 statutes required the prefect of the library to write out a catalogue, a second copy of which was to be sent to the president. Detailed instructions were given: 'at the titles of each letter let interspaces be left, where the names of other authors may be placed, and let the Prefect carefully and betimes take care, that the new books which may subsequently be bought in, may be annexed to the general catalogue and let him give the names to the President every three months'.⁴⁷ This catalogue was duly compiled, though not updated after the late 1820s. It lists 5,000 titles



John O'Hanlon,
college librarian
1843-71. Oil on
canvas, 124cm x
81cm. Maynooth
College.

Maynooth 29th Nov. 1811

Dear Uncle

(On the supposition, from your last letter, that the French & British were in Dublin & that the troops & also in reputation of selling the O'Connell & O'Connell to one of the students was, is going in the morning; I dispatched a carrier to Dublin on Friday last. who enquired of the Black man's head, according to your directions what they told him there were no such things left for me, & notwithstanding the disappointment I must entertain may be. I apprehend there has happened some serious mistake in the business; otherwise, I think you would have written to me. I wish you had not put on a Mr. O'Connell's name. I do assure you I have very great reason for several things contained in my former letter. I had written to my father to send it, & I am sure I would have said long since. I would not be so anxious but I wanted to present those things which are necessary for me in the place

Letter from
Maynooth
student Eugene
Conwell to his
uncle Henry
Conwell,
Dungannon, 29
November 1801.

under eight headings: Sacred Scripture (412); Holy Fathers and Sermons (437); Ecclesiastical History (484); Profane History and Biography (754); Theology (761); Law, Canon and Civil (439); Philosophy (641); Belles Lettres (1,029). Entries are in rough alphabetical order by title or author, and each entry gives the size, number of volumes, place and year of publication, and a shelf number. The headings used were standard for the time except that



Laying the foundation stone for the new library, 18 April 1981.

From left: S. Hendy, architect; Michael Olden, college president; Gaetano Alibrandi, papal nuncio; President Hillery; Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich; Martin O'Donoghue, minister for education. Photograph by Margaret O'Regan.

there was no attempt to create subheadings or to mark the books to correspond with the shelf numbers.

The 1853 commission noted that 'the catalogue of the present library is very defective, and by reason of the books not being marked to correspond, it is, as the Prefect told us, nearly useless'.⁴⁸ However, it was not the catalogue which bothered readers but the order of books on the shelves. George Crolly stated at the 1853 commission that 'the books are so scattered in all directions, that I have gone to Trinity College Library to consult a book which I knew to be in our own, but which I in vain endeavoured to find'.⁴⁹ By 1895 John Healy could write: 'there is at present a good catalogue of all the books contained in the chief libraries. When the fire in 1878 occurred that collection was considered to be in danger, and the books were removed for safety. On replacing them it was thought well to adopt a new arrangement, the effect of which was to render quite useless the catalogue then in existence. When the present Bishop of Raphoe held the office of librarian he began the compilation of a new catalogue, a work which was completed some years ago. The order observed in this catalogue is mainly that of the author's name, but there are frequent references to the subjects treated. If this order is not ideally perfect, it suffices at

<i>Philosophy</i>					
	<i>Form</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Shelf</i>	
<i>Marquis de C. Hospital</i>	8 ^o 1	Paris	1716	5	
<i>Masculine marinus guide</i>	8 ^o 1	London	1763	4	
<i>Melancholy causes of</i>	4 ^o 1			4	
<i>Marcas elemens de Carithon</i>	8 ^o 1	Paris	1761	5	
<i>Marspicius curus de</i>	8 ^o 3	Lyon	1736	5	
<i>Maxon on the globes</i>	8 ^o 1	London	1671	5	
<i>Macquis dictionnaire de Chysnic</i>	8 ^o 4	Turco	1777	15	
<i>Martin elemens de Math.</i>	8 ^o 1	Holmsse	1741	15	
<i>Murrays chemistry</i>	8 ^o 2	Edinburgh	1111	15	
<i>Muskebook elemens of natural philosophy</i>	8 ^o 2	London	1744	15	
<i>Molls geography</i>	4 ^o 1	London	1723	1	
<i>Macclaurin decouvertes de Newton</i>	8 ^o 1	Paris	1749	4	
<i>Macquis elemens de Chysnic</i>	12 ^o 1	Paris	1736	8	
<i>Memores de la litterature</i>	8 ^o 23	Amsterdam	1736	14	
<i>Maltburns geography</i>	1 ^o 5	Paris	1112	36	
<i>Malpighii circulator de structura vivo</i>	18 ^o 1	London	1669	24	
<i>Mappe geolori Philos.</i>	8 ^o 2	London	1743	35	
<i>Molyneuxs treatise on Dioptrics</i>	8 ^o 1	London	1692	2	
<i>Moralia memorabilia</i>	12 ^o 1	Coloniae	1572	33	
<i>Musshon introduction to natural Philosophy</i>	8 ^o 1	Lyon	1762	10	
<i>Milners Botanical Dictionary</i>	8 ^o 1	London	1771	6	
<i>M. L'auronnes geometry</i>	8 ^o 1	London	1720	4	

Page from the
first library
catalogue, 1820s.

least for working purposes.⁵⁰

When it was decided to re-catalogue the library in the 1930s a unique system of classification based substantially on the Ratio Studiorum of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities was chosen. Lack of staff precluded the use of the Dewey system or any modification of it. In any event, Dewey was not particularly suited to a theological library, though a more suitable alternative version had recently been published.⁵¹ The books were arranged from left to right, bottom to top, so that folios

could be at the bottom and duodecimo at the top. Cataloguing was done according to a simple 'Cutter' system, the notation being adapted from one in use in the University of Copenhagen and at the Sorbonne.⁵² An author and a subject card were typed for each item.

In the 1940s the four junior libraries were reorganised, and for the first time there was a union catalogue recording all books possessed by the college and where they could be found. Students were employed to do this work, and their reports give an interesting picture of the student libraries of the period. It also resulted in many mistakes, including the cataloguing of all the bibles under 'Anonymous'. Despite the inevitable backlogs reported from time to time, the classification and cataloguing system was satisfactory until the 1960s. Like all home-made classifications it was eventually unable to handle the growth of knowledge and range of subjects covered by the library.

The slow and expensive process of re-cataloguing the library (now nearing completion) was begun in 1983. Typed catalogue cards were abandoned after two years in favour of purchasing records from an outside agency and a microfiche catalogue was produced. In 1991 the library acquired its own computer and an on-line catalogue was introduced. The Russell Library of pre-1850 books will continue to be arranged according to the system introduced in the 1930s, though records will be added to the on-line catalogue as the books are re-catalogued.

For almost twenty years between the mid-1960s and the 1980s the records show the library painfully developing from an enclosed seminary to a modern university library and desperately trying to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding user population without adequate resources. The committee meeting of 11 May 1968 reported that the 'students' reactions, as expressed in student publications, was that we had practically no library system at all; whereas we had a not bad research library'. Most students, however, were only interested in multiple copies of textbooks—a service hitherto not seen as part of the library's function. The minutes of 18 November 1968 wondered, '... in view of the coldness of the Library, the lack of light, and the lack of reading facilities, if there was any point in its being open at all?'

The new order

On 4 March 1968 serious disciplinary problems were recorded: 'the Library was wasting away from what might be called a haemorrhage of books and journals lost, misplaced, borrowed and not duly returned, bindings damaged and not speedily repaired'. Discipline had become a serious problem as the library was now open with so few staff, virtually no supervision and a student body no longer made up solely of law-abiding clerics. Mutilation of books was reported and an effort to solve the ongoing problem of misplaced books was attempted, with a fine of £2.0.0 suggested for readers found purposely misplacing books. Requests for longer opening hours posed a problem owing to lack of any lighting. The minutes of 18 November 1968 recorded that it was not possible to extend hours because 'there was too much danger of students going upstairs and lighting matches to look for books'.

The first of two outside consultants was appointed in 1970 but despite several visits never produced a report. The second consultant reported in 1975 and his report gives a very gloomy picture of the library, reflecting the dismay felt by a librarian from a modern new British university library confronted by an enclosed seminary library with virtually no resources and suddenly being expected to organise a university library service.

Over the next decade the library did manage to expand, first consolidating its service into three points—the old library, the Arts Block and St Mary's. Storerooms and office space were added where possible as the staff and the book collection increased. The John Paul II Library opened in 1984, leaving the Russell Library to function once again as a research library containing older printed books and manuscripts. The installation of an integrated computer system in 1991 provided a welcome improvement to the library services as well as making the library catalogue available worldwide on the international computer networks. Today the library is in a strong position to face the many changes brought about by new technological developments, the ever-increasing number of students, and new methods and patterns of teaching in third-level education.

NOTES

1. *Eighth report of the Commissioners of Irish Education: Roman Catholic College of Maynooth*, PP 1826-7, xiii. 537-998; *Report of Her Majesty's commissioners appointed to inquire into the management and government of the College of Maynooth . . .*, PP 1854-5, xxii.
2. J. Healy, *Maynooth College, its centenary history, 1795-1895* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1895), 645-50.
3. T. Wall, 'Rare books in Maynooth College Library', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 52 (1938), 46-59; D. Meehan, 'Maynooth College buildings: some difficulties', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 69 (1947), 89-91; S. Corkery, 'Maynooth College Library', *An Leabharlann* 14 (2) (1956), 51-7.
4. D. Meehan, *Window on Maynooth* (Dublin: Clonmore and Reynolds, 1949), 123-37.
5. Nicholas Callan (1799-1864), professor of mathematics and natural philosophy; inventor of the induction coil.
6. J. Sheehan, 'A ramble through Maynooth', *Vexilla Regis* (1960), 90.
7. St Charles Borromeo, *Institutiones ad universum seminarium regimen pertinentes* (Milan: Typis S. Ghezzi, 1884), 93-4 (translated from the 1599 edition).
8. A. M. Micheletti, *Constitutiones seminariorum clericalium . . .* (Turin: Marietti, 1919), 170-2.
9. Pius XI, 'Deus scientiarum Dominus', *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 23 (1931), 279 (translated from the Latin).
10. *Statuta Collegii R. Catholici apud Maynooth* (Dublin: Fitzpatrick, 1820), 30.
11. *Eighth report, Maynooth*, 1826-7, 90.
12. Healy, *Maynooth*, 648.
13. W. McDonald, *Reminiscences of a Maynooth professor* (London: Cape, 1925), 66.
14. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 1, appendix, nos 8 and 9.
15. Don Boyne (Neil Kevin), *I remember Maynooth* (London: Longmans, Green, 1937), 19.
16. J. N. Brewer, *The beauties of Ireland* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1826), ii, 68.
17. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 2, 189.
18. Meehan, *Window on Maynooth*, 124-7.
19. *Report to the trustees*, 9 October 1949.
20. McDonald, *Reminiscences*, 188.
21. *Statuta Collegii* (1820), 28.
22. D. Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1974), 152.
23. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 2, 8.
24. *Report to the trustees concerning the present state of the college libraries* [1950], 2.

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25. H. Fairhurst, *Report on the library, St Patrick's College Maynooth* (1975), 7.
26. *Papers presented to the House of Commons relating to the Royal College of St Patrick, Maynooth*, PP 1808, ix, 371, 32.
27. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 1, 170.
28. Correspondence of Eugene Conwell (1798-1805), who matriculated in 1801, held in the Russell Library, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, a selection of which was published in *Letters from Maynooth: calendar of letters of Rev. Eugene Conwell, 1798-1805*, edited by Brother Luke (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1941).
29. *Eighth report, Maynooth*, 1826-7, 115.
30. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 1, 102.
31. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 1, 91.
32. McDonald, *Reminiscences*, 55.
33. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 2, 6.
34. McDonald, *Reminiscences*, 65.
35. Edited transcript of an interview recorded on 12 June 1985 with Seán Corkery, librarian of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1951-73: Maynooth College, *Library Archives*, 2, 2.
36. Brewer, *The beauties of Ireland*, ii, 68.
37. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 1, 113.
38. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 1, 121.
39. G. O'Donovan, *Father Ralph* (Dingle: Brandon, 1993), 158. (First published 1913.)
40. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 2, 136.
41. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 1, 98.
42. *Report to the trustees*, 9 October 1949.
43. *Report on the college libraries* [1950], 1.
44. *Eighth report, Maynooth*, 1826-7, 183.
45. *Report on the college libraries* [1950], 4.
46. *Report on the college libraries* [1950], 4.
47. *Statuta Collegii* (1820), 28-9.
48. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 1, 64.
49. *Report on Maynooth*, 1854-5, pt 1, 98.
50. Healy, *Maynooth*, 650. Patrick O'Donnell was the bishop of Raphoe.
51. J. M. Lynn, *An alternative classification for Catholic books . . .* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1937).
52. T. Wall, 'Classification and arrangement' (unpublished report, [193?]).