



Peter Fox

TRINITY
COLLEGE
LIBRARY
DUBLIN

A History

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Trinity College Library Dublin

This is the first comprehensive, scholarly history of Trinity College Library Dublin. It covers the whole 400 years of the Library's development, from its foundation by James Ussher in the seventeenth century to the electronic revolution of the twenty-first century. Particular attention is given to the buildings and to the politics involved in obtaining funding for them, as well as to the acquisition of the great treasures, such as the Book of Kells and the libraries of Ussher, Claudius Gilbert and Hendrik Fagel. An important aspect is the comprehensive coverage of legal deposit from the beginning of the nineteenth century, viewed for the first time from the Irish perspective. The book also draws parallels with the development of other libraries in Dublin and with those of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and features throughout the individuals who influenced the Library's development – librarians, politicians, readers, book collectors and book thieves.

PETER FOX has over 30 years' experience at a senior level in academic libraries, including 15 years in Trinity College Library. In 2009 he retired as the Librarian of the University of Cambridge, having held the post since 1994. Before that he was the College Librarian and Archivist at Trinity College Dublin. He was also a Curator of the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, and a member of a number of committees at the British Library. He has edited several books, including *Cambridge University Library: The Great Collections* (Cambridge, 1998), the commentary volume to *The Book of Kells, MS 58, Trinity College Library Dublin* (1990) and *Treasures of the Library: Trinity College Dublin* (1986).

Trinity College Library Dublin

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For Isobel, Louise and Jenny

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Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Abbott, <i>Incunabula</i> | T. K. Abbott, <i>Catalogue of fifteenth-century books in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, and in Marsh's Library, Dublin, with a few from other collections</i> (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1905) |
| Abbott, <i>Manuscripts</i> | T. K. Abbott, <i>Catalogue of the manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin; to which is added a list of the Fagel collection of maps in the same library</i> (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1900) |
| Abbott and Gwynn | T. K. Abbott and E. J. Gwynn, <i>Catalogue of the Irish manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin</i> (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1921) |
| <i>Annual Bulletin</i> | <i>Annual Bulletin of the Friends of the Library of Trinity College, Dublin</i> |
| Annual Report | Annual Report, Trinity College Library Dublin (MUN/LIB/32/177–8) |
| BA | Bachelor of Arts |
| BL | British Library |
| Boran, 'Libraries' | Elizabethanne Boran, 'Libraries and learning: the early history of Trinity College Dublin from 1592 to 1641' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, 1995) |
| BNB | British National Bibliography |
| <i>Cambridge history</i> | <i>The Cambridge history of libraries in Britain and Ireland</i> , 3 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 2006) |
| Colker | Marvin L. Colker, <i>Trinity College Library Dublin: descriptive catalogue of the mediaeval and renaissance Latin manuscripts</i> (Aldershot: Scolar, 1991) |
| <i>Commons In Ireland</i> | <i>The journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland</i> , 19 vols. (Dublin: George Grierson, 1795–1800) |
| Craster | Sir Edmund Craster, <i>History of the Bodleian Library, 1845–1945</i> (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1952) |
| CUA ULIB | Cambridge University Archives, Archives of Cambridge University Library |
| <i>Decantations</i> | Agnes Bernelle, ed., <i>Decantations: a tribute to Maurice Craig</i> (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1992) |
| <i>DU Calendar</i> | <i>The Dublin University Calendar, 1833–</i> |

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| DU Commission | <i>Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the state, discipline, studies and revenues of the University of Dublin, and of Trinity College, together with Appendices containing Evidence, Suggestions and Correspondence</i> , [1637], 1852–3, XLV, 1 |
| EPB | Early Printed Books Department |
| <i>Essays</i> | Vincent Kinane and Anne Walsh, eds., <i>Essays on the history of Trinity College Library Dublin</i> (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000) |
| Harris | P. R. Harris, <i>A history of the British Museum Library 1753–1973</i> (London: British Library, 1998) |
| HC | House of Commons |
| HEA | Higher Education Authority |
| HL | House of Lords |
| HMC | Historical Manuscripts Commission |
| HMSO | Her (His) Majesty's Stationery Office |
| Holland | C. H. Holland, ed., <i>Trinity College Dublin and the idea of a university</i> (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin Press, 1991) |
| <i>Irish book</i> | Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield, eds., <i>The Irish book in English 1550–1800</i> (Oxford University Press, 2006) <i>The Oxford history of the Irish book</i> , vol. III |
| JRSAI | <i>Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland</i> |
| <i>Kells facsimile</i> | Peter Fox, ed., <i>The Book of Kells: MS 58, Trinity College Library, Dublin</i> (Luzern: Faksimile Verlag, 1990) |
| <i>Lords Jn Ireland</i> | <i>Journals of the House of Lords [of Ireland]</i> , 8 vols. (Dublin: William Sleater, 1779–1800) |
| MA | Master of Arts |
| McDonnell and Healy | Joseph McDonnell and Patrick Healy, <i>Gold-tooled bookbindings commissioned by Trinity College Dublin in the eighteenth century</i> (Leixlip: Irish Georgian Society, 1987) |
| McDowell and Webb | R. B. McDowell and D. A. Webb, <i>Trinity College Dublin, 1592–1952: an academic history</i> (Cambridge University Press, 1982) |
| McKitterick | David McKitterick, <i>Cambridge University Library: a history; the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries</i> (Cambridge University Press, 1986) |
| Mahaffy, <i>Epoch</i> | John Pentland Mahaffy, <i>An epoch in Irish history: Trinity College, Dublin, its foundation and early fortunes, 1591–1660</i> (London: Fisher Unwin, 1903) |
| MP | Member of Parliament |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| MS | Manuscript (MS numbers quoted are from Trinity College Library unless otherwise indicated) |
| MUN | Muniment (Trinity College Dublin archives) |
| NAI | National Archives of Ireland |
| NLI | National Library of Ireland |
| <i>Old Library</i> | W. E. Vaughan, ed., <i>The Old Library, Trinity College Dublin: 1712–2012</i> (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013) |
| Partridge | R. C. Barrington Partridge, <i>The history of the legal deposit of books throughout the British Empire</i> (London: Library Association, 1938) |
| <i>Proc. RIA</i> | <i>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy</i> |
| PRONI | Public Record Office of Northern Ireland |
| RIA | Royal Irish Academy |
| RUL | Reading University Library |
| SCONUL | Standing Conference of National and University Libraries [of the United Kingdom and Ireland] |
| Smyly | J. G. Smyly, 'The Old Library: extracts from the Particular Book', <i>Hermathena</i> , 49 (1935), 166–83 |
| <i>Tanner letters</i> | Charles McNeill, ed., <i>The Tanner letters . . . extracted from the collection in the Bodleian Library, Oxford</i> (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1943) |
| TCD | Trinity College Dublin |
| TD | Teachta Dála (member of Dáil Éireann) |
| TNA | The National Archives [of the United Kingdom] |
| <i>Trans. RIA</i> | <i>Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy</i> |
| <i>Treasures</i> | Peter Fox, ed., <i>Treasures of the Library: Trinity College Dublin</i> (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1986) |

Introduction

Trinity College Library is the oldest and by far the largest library in Ireland and one of the most important university libraries in Europe. It is unique in the variety of roles it performs. Its special collections, built up over 400 years, combined with its right to claim copies of books and journals published in both Ireland and the United Kingdom, under legal-deposit legislation, have made it a quasi-national library and a research resource of international importance. As home to the Book of Kells, which is housed in the magnificent setting of the Old Library, it is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Ireland and, unusually for an academic library, provides a significant income for its parent institution.

In many ways, the Library is the College's greatest asset. Certainly, when the name of Trinity College is mentioned outside its walls, more often than not it is the Library that springs to mind. The speed with which it was established, in the first few decades after the foundation of the College in 1592, was remarkable, and the early Fellows were clear that its purpose was to support Trinity's principal function of promoting 'civility, learning and Protestant piety' among the youth of Ireland.¹ Until the nineteenth century, its role was essentially a custodial one and in this respect it differed little from other university libraries, where 'collections were acquired, catalogued, gloated over and admired'.² Yet much of its history is characterised by periods of relative neglect, interspersed with bursts of activity initiated by individual energetic and efficient Librarians. The Fellows as a whole showed little interest in the running of the Library and its development, which, for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, owed more to the influence of external forces than to internal planning. Indeed, until the second half of the nineteenth century, the majority of the manuscript treasures and great collections arrived as the result of donations or bequests, with little active intervention on the part of the College: Ussher's library came as a gift from the Irish House of Commons, sanctioned by Charles II; Claudius Gilbert's library was a bequest; and the Fagel collection was

¹ McDowell and Webb, p. 5.

² Peter Freshwater, 'Books and universities', in *Cambridge history*, vol. II, pp. 345–70 (p. 358).

bought for the College by the Erasmus Smith Trust. Even the Library's legal-deposit status was an incidental result of a political decision made for other reasons, and the College remained indifferent at first to what was the most important gift in the Library's history.

There are, of course, exceptions to this passive approach, and the impact – for good or ill – of those Librarians who held office for more than a handful of years is one of the principal features of this story. In the late eighteenth century, Thomas Leland's involvement with Irish studies, his encouragement of scholars and his ability to persuade the College to part with its money for the purchase of manuscripts created a suitable environment for the gift of the Sebright collection, which placed the Library in the first rank among holdings of Irish manuscripts. In the nineteenth century, Jacky Barrett and James Henthorn Todd capitalised on the College's periods of relative affluence to develop the collection by extensive purchasing and by employing sufficient staff to process not just what was being bought but also the growing flood of materials arriving under the terms of the Copyright Acts. The Library's copyright or legal-deposit status has had an overwhelming influence, not only on the collection itself, but on all aspects of the way the institution has been run and used since the early nineteenth century. The need to find space to house the ever-growing collection has been a perennial problem for successive Librarians.

Until the mid nineteenth century, use of the Library was restricted to graduates, which meant that the number of readers using its books and manuscripts was relatively low. Changes to the curriculum and the admission of undergraduates led to a growth in use, particularly after the First World War. Unfortunately, this coincided with an unprecedented increase in the amount of material being received by legal deposit, a growing impoverishment of the College following Irish independence, and the incumbency of a Librarian, Josiah Gilbert Smyly, whose involvement with the running of the Library was minimal. As a result, resources became very thinly spread and the Library suffered a period of serious decline. It was not until the 1950s that efforts to restore the standing of both the College and its Library began to bear fruit. Despite the relative poverty of the Irish universities in comparison to those in other parts of the developed world, Trinity College is now a major player on the world scene and its Library not only plays a fundamental role in the support of teaching and research in the College but is an internationally important resource for scholarship, heavily used by students and scholars from all over the world.

The highlights in the story of the Library were retold in various publications during the nineteenth century, but relatively little primary research has been undertaken until recently on its history, its collections, its users

and its staff. The collections themselves have now been covered extensively in two books: *Treasures of the Library* and *The Old Library*.³ The publication of a book of *Essays* in 2000, and more recent research, have unlocked a considerable amount of new information, but the editors of the *Essays* noted that there was at that time an insufficient critical mass of research to provide the background for a full academic history.⁴ The College muniments (archives) document the organisation, buildings and acquisitions reasonably well – at least from the eighteenth century onwards – but there are still gaps in our knowledge of the Library’s history. In particular, its impact on teaching and research in the College and on the wider world of scholarship, and its use by individual readers are both areas which deserve further study.

The purpose of the present book is not to duplicate the work on the collections that have already been published, but to provide a chronological narrative showing how the Library has developed, the context into which its collections fit, the buildings in which they were housed and used, something of its organisation and, as far as current research permits, a glimpse at the use that has been made of it by readers. No library operates in isolation and, although this is not intended as a comparative history, the fortunes of other libraries have been included where they are relevant to the story of Trinity College Library. As an institution which had an English queen as its foundress and Cambridge men as its first five Provosts, Trinity College has traditionally related more closely to the ancient English universities than to the Scottish ones – and of course it was the only university in Ireland until the middle of the nineteenth century. This relationship applies equally to the Library, particularly after its inclusion among the British legal-deposit libraries in 1801, a status lost by the Scottish universities in 1836. Most of the comparative statistics that have been included, therefore, are for the other two university legal-deposit libraries, the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and Cambridge University Library, as comparison between Trinity and other Irish or British university libraries is less straightforward, none being comparable in size to those three and all having to acquire most of their books and journals by purchase.

A note on terminology

The terms Trinity College Dublin and the University of Dublin are a frequent source of confusion. The Elizabethan College charter contained the curious

³ *Treasures, Old Library.* ⁴ *Essays.*

phrase '*mater universitatis*'. Quite what was meant by the designation of Trinity College as the 'mother of a university' is unclear, and the phrase has been interpreted in a number of ways. Was the University of Dublin founded on the model of Oxford and Cambridge, with Trinity as its first college and the assumption that others would follow, as nearly happened in the 1650s? Or was it a precursor of colonial foundations such as Harvard and the College of William and Mary, with a single authority acting as both college and university? 'To say that Trinity was founded as a college and became a university is a convenient way of explaining to the bewildered the oddity of an institution which manages to be both simultaneously.'⁵ The distinction between the University of Dublin and Trinity College has changed over the years, but in essence it is the College which provides the teaching and research facilities, including the Library, and the University which confers degrees, though for most day-to-day purposes the two institutions are synonymous.

The University has a Chancellor and several Pro-Chancellors (the office of Vice-Chancellor was abolished in 1964), but all of those roles are primarily of a formal or ceremonial nature. The head of the College is the Provost, a post equivalent to Vice-Chancellor or President elsewhere, and the College is run by the Board, which until 1911 consisted of the Provost and the seven Senior Fellows. After that date its membership was gradually extended to include representatives of the Junior Fellows, professors and, later, students and other members of staff. Until the nineteenth century, most of the 'annual officers' were elected from among the Senior Fellows on 20 November each year. The principal officers included the Vice-Provost, Bursar (responsible for the financial management of the College), Registrar (who maintained the records of both the College and the University) and Senior Lecturer (responsible for undergraduate studies). Although these offices still exist, much of their work has now been taken over by professional administrators, but for most of the period covered by this book the officers were academics who worked with little or no administrative support. The Librarian was also one of these officers, but his election on an annual basis ceased in the eighteenth century. It took until 1965 for Trinity to appoint its first full-time Librarian, long after other comparable institutions, but this was in the context of a university which, even in 1939, had only five full-time administrative staff and the same number of secretaries.⁶

⁵ Aidan Clarke, 'Responsibility: the administrative framework', in Holland, pp. 89–105 (p. 89).
See also McDowell and Webb, pp. 1–5.

⁶ McDowell and Webb, p. 443.

Copyright and legal deposit

Throughout the book I have used the term ‘legal deposit’ rather than ‘copyright’ to refer to the process by which publishers are obliged to deposit copies of their books with specified libraries. Until 1842, publishers wishing to protect the copyright in their books were required to register them at Stationers’ Hall in London, which then rendered them eligible for deposit in the libraries. The 1842 Copyright Act removed the link between copyright protection and deposit, but legal-deposit legislation continued to be included in successive Copyright Acts until 1911 and the term ‘copyright library’ persisted until the late twentieth century.

Conventions

In quoting from manuscript material I have not changed spellings, but abbreviations and ampersands have usually been filled out, and archaisms such as *y^e* and *y^t*, punctuation and capitalisation have been modernised. Throughout this book references to MUN and MS numbers without any further indication of location are invariably to documents in Trinity College Library. In all other cases the holding library or archive is indicated.

In September 1752, Britain and Ireland adopted the Gregorian calendar, which prescribed that the year should start on 1 January, rather than 25 March. I have followed that convention for all dates (i.e. the day following 31 December 1603 is rendered here as 1 January 1604, not 1 January 1603, as would appear in the sources) and the day and month are given as they appear in the original documents.

Currency amounts quoted are those recorded in the documents themselves, and, unless specified, they refer to Irish pounds at times when those were different from sterling. Throughout the eighteenth century thirteen Irish pounds equalled twelve pounds sterling, and in 1826 the Irish currency was assimilated to the British. This arrangement lasted until 1979, when Ireland joined the European Monetary System, breaking its link with sterling, and in 2002 the Irish pound was replaced by the euro.

At various times during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries attempts had been made to found a university in Dublin, but as Ireland entered the 1590s it was still without such an institution. By that time, England's two universities were already around 400 years old and Scotland had three that had been founded before 1500. With the relative peace following the religious upheavals of the earlier part of the sixteenth century, there was a flowering of new universities and colleges across Europe: Jesus College, Oxford was established in 1571, Leiden in 1575, Edinburgh in 1582, Emmanuel College, Cambridge in 1584 and Graz in 1585.

In Ireland, it was recognised from the 1560s that, if the Reformation was to become embedded, its inhabitants needed to be educated and its clergy to be trained in the Protestant faith. After a number of proposed schemes had come to naught, the mayor and corporation of Dublin were persuaded in 1590 to set aside the land and the largely ruined buildings on the site of the former Augustinian priory of All Hallows, about a kilometre to the east of the city wall. Application was made to the Queen, Elizabeth I, and on 3 March 1592 the College of the Holy and Undivided Trinity near Dublin was granted a charter.

Unlike several of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, Trinity's foundation was not accompanied by a handsome endowment. The Queen, notorious for her frugality, encouraged the establishment of the new university but failed to provide any financial support. The initial funding to set up the College had to be collected by means of a public appeal, addressed to gentlemen in every county of Ireland. The appeal raised over £2,000, but throughout the first decade of its existence the College was beset by financial difficulties. It was granted estates in the 1590s, but the uprising of the Earl of Tyrone meant that the rent from those estates could not be collected until after Mountjoy's victory at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601.¹

Some building did take place in the early years. By the end of the Elizabethan era, the College consisted of a quadrangle of three-storey buildings,

¹ Mahaffy, *Epoch*, pp. 60–111; Colm Lennon, “‘The bowels of the city’s bounty’: the municipality of Dublin and the foundation of Trinity College”, *Long Room*, 37 (1992), 10–16.

with Chapel, Hall and Kitchen on the north side, incorporating part of the former monastery, the Library on the south side, and students' chambers forming most of the remainder. A later drawing shows this layout. (See [Figure 3](#).) When the first students arrived in 1594, only the west and north sides had been completed, but work was proceeding on the remaining buildings, including the Library, for which Roger Parker, described as the 'steward', was paying bills for woodwork, hinges, nails and glass in 1595 and 1596.²

Challoner and Ussher

During the first few years of the College's existence, its Library collection consisted of a mere handful of books. The Particular Book, the earliest extant record of College affairs, contains a list of '*libri in publica Collegii Bibliotheca*', dated 24 February 1601.³ (See [Figure 1](#).) It records around forty printed works, including editions of classical writers such as Aristotle, Plato and Cicero, atlases by Mercator and Ptolemy, and a number of theological titles. Seven of the books were a gift from Richard Latewar, a former Fellow of St John's College, Oxford, who was killed in County Tyrone in 1601 whilst serving with Mountjoy's forces and who left books and manuscripts to his Oxford college, as well as to Trinity.⁴ Most of the printed books, and probably at least one of the manuscripts listed as being in the Library in 1601, are still present, but the majority of the entries for manuscripts have been crossed through, probably indicating that they were subsequently found to be missing. Three were gifts from Christopher Ussher, Ulster King of Arms.

The early members of the College had access to many more books than those represented in this small collection. Luke Challoner, one of the three founding Fellows, had amassed a substantial library of over eight hundred books by the 1590s, including works on philosophy, theology, history, astronomy, mathematics and geography, with maps by some of the important sixteenth-century cartographers. It is clear that Challoner was collecting not just for his own use, but also for that of students and other Fellows, to

² MS 2640 (transcription, MS 2641).

³ The Particular Book is now MUN/V/1/1. See also: TCD, *The Particular Book of Trinity College, Dublin: a facsimile from the original*, with an Introduction and appendices by J. P. Mahaffy (London: Unwin, 1904). References to the Library were collected by J. G. Smyly in 'The Old Library: extracts from the Particular Book', *Hermathena*, 49 (1935), 166–83, and for convenience these, rather than references to the original manuscript, are cited below (as Smyly).

⁴ Mahaffy, *Epoch*, pp. 141–2; K. J. Hölzgen, 'Richard Latewar, Elizabethan poet and divine', *Anglia*, 89 (1971), 417–38.

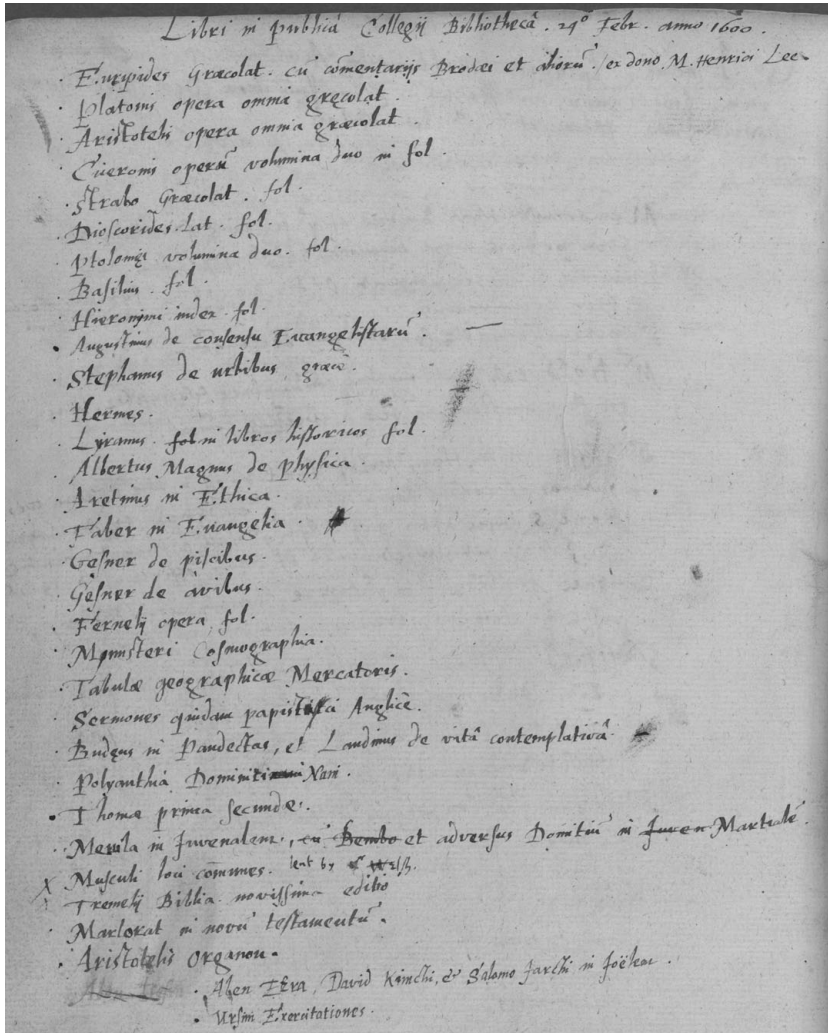


Figure 1 The first list of books in the Library, 24 February 1600/01 (MUN/V/1/1, fol. 216v.)

whom he lent books from his collection.⁵ One of his notebooks contains three catalogues of his library, dated 1595, 1596 and 1608, and lists of books lent, dated 1601 and 1610, with the names of the borrowers, including several of the Fellows, with the titles crossed out to indicate their return.⁶

⁵ Elizabethanne Boran, 'Luke Challoner's library, 1595–1608', *Long Room*, 37 (1992), 17–26; Boran, 'Libraries', p. 5.

⁶ MS 357, fols. 1–15.

The year 1601 marks the beginning of the College Library proper. As well as being the date of the first list of books, it was also the year when a Library Keeper was appointed and when the first recorded purchases took place. Between then and 1613, several members of the College undertook book-buying visits to England. Funding for the books bought on those expeditions came from a donation that had been promised to the College in 1593 but which was not received until 1601. A legend prevailed for over 200 years that a sum of £1,800 for the purchase of books had been donated by the officers of the army after Mountjoy's victory at Kinsale. That legend, almost certainly started in 1656 by Nicholas Bernard, the keeper of Archbishop Ussher's library and his first biographer, was conclusively disproved by J. P. Mahaffy in 1903.⁷ The amount donated was smaller than Bernard claimed and, though its source was indeed a gift from officers of the army, it dated from 1593, not 1601, and it was made to assist with the founding of the new College and not specifically for the Library. Bernard manipulated the story for political purposes, as will be seen in the next chapter. It appears that the soldiers were owed payment for their service in Ireland and that they decided to donate this money to the College.

The process of extracting the money from the Queen and Lord Burghley, however, turned out to be far from simple. In February 1593 the Lord Deputy, Sir William Fitzwilliam, sent to Burghley and the Privy Council a number of bills 'given by certain captains towards the building of the college', asking for reimbursement.⁸ The following month Challoner and others also wrote to ask for the money, amounting to £623 0s. 8d., owed to the 'captains serving in Ireland', requesting that it be transferred to the College as the soldiers had requested.⁹ A further letter from the Lord Deputy followed a year later, repeating the request, but it took until 1601 for the first payment to be released.¹⁰ Even then, the money seems to have arrived in small sums over a period of years, mostly through the hands of Sir James Carroll, an official of the government in Ireland, who was closely involved with the College finances.

The first of the book-buying expeditions was undertaken by Challoner in June 1601. He bought around 350 items from a number of London book-sellers, including Gregory Seton of Aldersgate, from whom he purchased

⁷ Nicholas Bernard, *The life and death of the most reverend and learned father of our church, Dr James Ussher* (London: Tyler, 1656), p. 42; J. P. Mahaffy, 'The Library of Trinity College, Dublin: the growth of a legend', *Hermathena*, 12 (1903), 68–78.

⁸ H. C. Hamilton, ed., *Calendar of state papers Ireland, Elizabeth, 1592–1596* (London: HMSO, 1890), pp. 77–8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

145 titles at a total cost of £58.¹¹ On his second visit to England, in 1603, Challoner was accompanied by the 22-year-old James Ussher, who had taken his MA at Trinity 2 years earlier and was later to become his son-in-law. (See [Figure 2.](#)) Ussher knew Challoner's library and used books from it, but this journey was his first introduction to the wider world of serious book-collecting and scholarship, when he began to assemble the nucleus of what was to become one of the most renowned private libraries of the age. On this visit, Challoner again bought extensively for the College. The Chester port-book for 1603 records the shipment by him of two barrels and one dryfat [chest] containing books valued at £100. In one year, possibly 1603, the College spent £568 9s. 0d. on the purchase of books and a further £20 on library desks.¹²

Ussher's journey to England was the first of what was to become a series of visits every 3 years until 1612, during each of which he spent about 3 months, not only buying books for the College and for his own growing library, but also undertaking research in Oxford and Cambridge. On those trips he met other scholars and collectors such as William Camden, Sir Thomas Bodley and Sir Robert Cotton, and after the visit of 1606 Camden asked Ussher to provide a description of Dublin for the next edition of his *Britannia*. Ussher did so, saying little about the College other than that it had been 'furnished of late with a notable library', a phrase added verbatim by Camden to the 1607 edition of his book.¹³

Challoner made one more visit, accompanying Ussher in 1609 and buying not just books but also globes and other items, to the value of £107 6s. 0d.¹⁴ The two men were mainly responsible for building up the Library, but they were not the only people entrusted to spend the College's money on books. In 1608, the Provost, Henry Alvey, travelled with a similar purpose, and in 1611 Anthony Martin, a Fellow, received payment for books that he had bought in England. Alvey's visit, and that of Challoner in 1609, are both well documented, and the booksellers from whom they made purchases are recorded: Adrian Marius, John Norton and John Bill in London, John Legate in Cambridge and Joseph Barnes in Oxford, several of whom were also

¹¹ Seton's bill, MS 2160a/10, is transcribed in William O'Sullivan, 'The Library before Kinsale', *Annual Bulletin*, (1952), 10–14. MS 2160a/1–17 consists of book lists from 1601–10, some in the hands of Ussher and Challoner and usually including the prices paid.

¹² D. M. Woodward, *The trade of Elizabethan Chester* (Hull: University, 1970), p. 21; MUN/LIB/10/4a.

¹³ C. R. Elrington, ed., *The whole works of the most rev. James Ussher*, 17 vols. (Dublin: Hodges & Smith, 1847–64), vol. XV, p. 11; William Camden, *Britannia* (London: George Bishop, 1607), p. 751.

¹⁴ MUN/LIB/10/4.

supplying Sir Thomas Bodley. Expenditure included calfskins for wrapping the books, a 'dryfat' in which they were transported, carriage by cart from London to Chester, storage in a warehouse there, where they were checked by customs officers, and then the cost of shipping to Dublin. The total price paid by Alvey in 1608 was £57 6s. 6d. and to this was added £7 4s. 4d. for packing and carriage.¹⁵ In 1612–13, a further £60 was spent on books for the Library.¹⁶ From entries in the Particular Book it has been estimated that £244 was spent on the purchase and carriage of books between the summer of 1608 and early 1613, the year of Challoner's death and the end of the initial development of the Library.¹⁷

The first Library collection

Although the officers' donation to the new College had not been given specifically for the Library, the Fellows decided to use it for that purpose. This must have been partly at the instigation of the great book-collector, Challoner, but it also demonstrated the importance they attached to developing the Library, even when Trinity was facing serious financial difficulties. This was a period when academic libraries were experiencing a revival after the turbulence and religious strife in the mid sixteenth century. Cambridge University Library, which had been almost abandoned in the middle of the century, was being restored to usefulness from the 1570s; in 1598, Sir Thomas Bodley offered to re-found Oxford's university library, which had effectively disappeared earlier in the century; and the new university in Edinburgh acquired a library that had been given to the city 2 years earlier.¹⁸

The collections in existing academic libraries had traditionally been built up on the basis of donations, such as those of Matthew Parker to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Andrew Perne to Peterhouse, Cambridge and Clement Little, whose books formed the basis of Edinburgh University Library. Trinity College Dublin was not favoured with major benefactions like these until after James Ussher's death, and so almost all of its initial collection had to be bought. This had the advantage of meaning that the Library was not subject to the private academic or collecting interest of an individual and that the developing collection could reflect the purpose of the Library as envisaged by the early members of the College. As in all universities of the time, that meant principally the training

¹⁵ MS 2160a/14–15; Smyly, pp. 172–3, 176. ¹⁶ MUN/P/1/66. ¹⁷ Smyly, p. 176.

¹⁸ Kristian Jensen, 'Universities and colleges', in *Cambridge history*, vol. I, pp. 345–62.

of the clergy – in Trinity’s case, specifically the Protestant clergy. In due course, as the collection grew and as the College became more established, the Library also became a resource for the research that helped to shape the theology of the Church of Ireland, and it provided Irish Protestant polemicists with the ammunition to refute the arguments of their Catholic compatriots.¹⁹

The undergraduate curriculum of the time was based loosely on the medieval *trivium* and *quadrivium*. The former covered grammar, logic and rhetoric and the latter arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy, and undergraduates received a thorough grounding in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Most students left Trinity after gaining their BA; those intending to proceed to ordination were then required to read political science, mathematics and physical science in order to obtain an MA, before they were allowed to study divinity.²⁰ The layout of the early Library reflected this pattern, with the books arranged in two main categories, theology and humanities. The lower (or outer) library contained the humanities books, which included those regarded as suitable for students reading for the BA and MA. The upper (inner) library, to which students were not admitted, was divided off by a partition and held the theology books. This arrangement by subject, rather than alphabetically, was similar to that adopted by Bodley.²¹ It seems that, as in Oxford, printed books and manuscripts were shelved together, though Ussher’s receipt for the loan of Roger Bacon’s *Opus maior* (MS 381) from ‘the presse of the manuscripts’ suggests that some manuscripts, at least, were housed separately even at this early date.²²

The humanities section was divided into ten class-divisions, and theology into fourteen. The first two divisions of the humanities section consisted of dictionaries, Latin, Greek and Hebrew grammars, and books on logic and rhetoric, in fact all the elements of the *trivium*. The collection was strong in the teaching of Petrus Ramus, evidence of the influence of Cambridge, where the first Provosts had been educated and where Ramist thought had become predominant. The influence of Ramist philosophy was not confined just to the subjects of the *trivium*, but in Trinity it had become an ‘all embracing methodology’.²³ Mathematics and astronomy were well represented, with

¹⁹ Alan Ford, *James Ussher: theology, history, and politics in early-modern Ireland and England* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 63, 174.

²⁰ McDowell and Webb, pp. 5–9.

²¹ *The first printed catalogue of the Bodleian Library, 1605: a facsimile* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. viii–ix.

²² MUN/LIB/10/8.

²³ Boran, ‘Libraries’, p. 248. Boran’s dissertation includes a detailed analysis of the contents of the early Library, on which much of this section is based. See also K. Theodore Hoppen,

some 300 titles, of which the majority were by recent writers such as Tycho Brahe, Copernicus and Gesner. The music section was dominated by psalms, reflecting the Calvinist view of their divine inspiration, but there were also madrigal texts, including works by Byrd and Tallis. History, not yet regarded as a curriculum subject in its own right, was represented by a range of chronologies and national histories. The founders of the College had intended medicine and law to be taught, and both were included in the early Library, although neither subject actually became part of the curriculum until the later seventeenth century. The medical books were principally those of the ancient writers, notably Galen and Hippocrates, but they included more recent authors such as Paracelsus and Vesalius. Botany and medicine were closely linked at the time, and the Library contained works by most of the important contemporary botanists. The legal section largely ignored English common law and concentrated on canon and civil law. The Roman law section was preceded by books on ancient history and politics by writers such as Tacitus, Sallust and Livy, and the English history books included major works by Camden and Francis Bacon.

The theology section accounted for more than half the Library, and it is clear that Challoner and Ussher intended it to be as comprehensive as possible. There were many Bibles, in English and the biblical languages, as well as polyglot editions. The commentaries included those by the Church Fathers and by more recent writers, chiefly Calvinist commentators. The polemical works reflected a similar pattern, with many by Puritan writers. The provision of books by members of the reformed church is unsurprising, but Challoner and Ussher also ensured that users of the Library had access to a collection of books by Catholic authors, to provide them with material upon which to base both their defence of the Protestant cause and criticism of their opponents. Ussher was conscious of the risks of including such controversial material, and this is presumably the principal reason why the theology section was kept separate and not accessible to students. In 1612, and again the following year, when sending books over from London, he asked Challoner to ensure that ‘the English popish books be kept in a place by themselves, and not placed among the rest of the library, for they may prove dangerous’.²⁴

By 1613, the Library contained around 4,500 books. Its scale and breadth far surpassed what was required purely for the teaching of the curriculum,

The common scientist in the seventeenth century: a study of the Dublin Philosophical Society, 1683–1708 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 59–61.

²⁴ Ussher, *Works*, note 13 above, vol. XVI, pp. 318–19, and vol. XV, p. 74.

and it is clear that Challoner and Ussher sought to develop a collection that was not only comprehensive but also reflected the most recent scholarship. The priority accorded to its development by the first group of Fellows meant that, within less than 20 years of Trinity's foundation, its library had surpassed in size those of much older colleges at Cambridge, such as Sidney Sussex, Trinity and Emmanuel, all of which contained fewer than two thousand books, and Cambridge University Library itself, which held no more than a thousand.²⁵ In Oxford, on the other hand, Sir Thomas Bodley's efforts to rebuild the University's library were on a grander scale even than those in Dublin, and by the time of Bodley's death in 1613 the library had grown to about seven thousand volumes.²⁶

In Trinity, the arrangements for readers were generous. By allowing students to use the lower (humanities) library, the College followed more closely the practice of the university libraries in Oxford and Cambridge, which admitted graduates, rather than that of their colleges, which normally allowed access only to the Fellows. Books could also be borrowed by, it seems, most categories of reader. A list of loans with the names of the borrowers has survived from around 1617.²⁷ When he was Archbishop of Armagh, Ussher borrowed not just the manuscript of Bacon's *Opus maius* but also a printed edition of Dionysius.²⁸ Men who were not members of the College were also permitted to use the collection; indeed, in 1602, Henry Fitzsimon, a Jesuit missionary who sought to engage Protestants in debate, was allowed access to books from the Library for one such disputation.²⁹

Readers normally worked in the lower library, which in the early years of the century was equipped with three tables and six benches for the purpose. In January 1611, ten benches were provided and a partition was built between the lower library and the upper section. It is unclear whether this was new or the repair of an existing partition, but its presence clearly offended one reader, who was fined later that month for 'offring violence' to the partition door.³⁰ The Library also contained a list of benefactors, twelve large maps and many smaller ones, four 'dutch tables, a sceliton with taffety hangings' and a table with two globes. In the gallery were another map and a revolving 'standing desk' for reading large folios.³¹

²⁵ Boran, 'Libraries', pp. 9–11; J. C. T. Oates, *Cambridge University Library: a history; from the beginnings to the Copyright Act of Queen Anne* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 152.

²⁶ Ian Philip, *The Bodleian Library in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 14.

²⁷ MUN/LIB/10/5. ²⁸ MUN/LIB/10/8. ²⁹ Ford, note 19 above, p. 13.

³⁰ Smyly, p. 170. ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

The shelfmarks of both books and manuscripts were written in black ink on their fore-edges, which faced outwards. They consisted of four elements: a letter T (for theology) or H (for humanities), and three numbers, the first representing the class-division, and other two denoting the shelf and the book's position on that shelf.³² A typical shelfmark might, therefore, be T.3.5.11. Many of the early shelfmarks have been lost as a result of later rebinding and trimming, as they were not normally inscribed inside the book as well as on the fore-edge. Some books contain a manuscript note, '*Collegii Sanctae et Individuae Trinitatis juxta Dublin*', but a more common, if brutal, method of indicating ownership took the form of stab-marks made by an awl or chisel driven into the title page and extending up to 1.5 cm into the text-block. The practice appears to have been employed by the first Library Keeper, Ambrose Ussher, who may have considered it to be a quicker method of indicating that the book belonged to the College than writing the lengthy *ex libris* at a time when books were arriving in the Library in considerable numbers.³³ The Particular Book records payment in 1611 to the Library Keeper for mending a chain, but as there are no marks of chains on the books themselves, it is assumed that the chain was stretched across the front of each shelf to prevent the books being removed.³⁴

Though Trinity now possessed a very respectable Library, notebooks kept by both Challoner and Ussher contain the names of people who had borrowed books from each of their private collections, an indication that they continued to be used to augment that belonging to the College. Indeed, the lack of overlap between the three collections provides evidence that, in their book-buying, the two men regarded them as complementary. Ussher's library covered similar subjects to Challoner's and was particularly strong in history and Protestant controversy, 'the prevalent tone of both collections [being] that of a Calvinist controversialist'.³⁵ Ussher's notebooks contain lists both of the books he loaned to other people and those which he borrowed, including a number from Challoner.³⁶ This network of borrowing by members of the College community, to augment the

³² MS 2; Norma MacManaway and Charles Benson, "'A sceliton with taffety hangings": the early College Library', in D. Scott, ed., *Treasures of the mind: a Trinity College Dublin Quatercentenary exhibition* (London: Sotheby's, 1992), pp. 143–50.

³³ Anthony Cains, 'The Long Room survey of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century books of the first collections', in *Essays*, pp. 53–71.

³⁴ Smyly, p. 172.

³⁵ Elizabethanne Boran, 'The libraries of Luke Challoner and James Ussher, 1595–1608', in Helga Robinson-Hammerstein, ed., *European universities in the age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1998), pp. 75–115 (p. 104).

³⁶ For example, MS 793, fol. 169.

official collection, continued for at least the first decade of the seventeenth century.

Challoner died in 1613, leaving his books to his daughter Phoebe, and on his deathbed is said to have asked her to marry Ussher. She did so and the library assembled by her father became part of Ussher's own and thus, eventually, part of the College Library. A later Provost, J. P. Mahaffy, remarked: 'whether that great lover of books [Ussher] regarded the lady as an appendage to the books, or the books to the lady, we do not know'.³⁷

Managing the Library

As the Library grew, it had to be managed and catalogued. In 1601, Ambrose Ussher, James' younger brother, who had graduated that year, appears in the records as the first Library Keeper. The small collection recorded in the simple list produced in 1601 was growing rapidly and a more sophisticated catalogue was required. Three complete or partial catalogues survive from the decade following the start of the book-buying expeditions.³⁸ The first, now among the Library's collection of papers of the seventeenth-century divine John Drury, appears to be in Challoner's hand. It is incomplete, covering only theology, with a few titles in law and politics, and has been dated to 1601 by Elizabethanne Boran, who believes that it could be a record of the first round of purchasing.³⁹ The next two catalogues, now MS 2 and MS 358, are alphabetical lists, which Boran has dated to 1604–5. MS 2 is missing its title page, but a mid-seventeenth-century copy of it (MS 1) includes a transcription of what was probably the now-missing first folio, recording that it was prepared by the Librarian, Ambrose Ussher, in 1604. The latest entry in the hand of the main compiler of MS 2, presumably Ussher, is for a book published in 1604, which suggests that it was initially completed that year, but as it contains later entries in different hands it appears also to have been used as an accessions catalogue, recording the subsequent acquisition of books. MS 358 is a copy of the original entries in MS 2 and may well have been made so that those engaged in buying books for the Library could take it with them to avoid the purchase of duplicates.

When Ambrose Ussher gained his MA in 1605, he resigned as the Library Keeper. His immediate successors were also men of BA status, who held

³⁷ Mahaffy, 'The Library', note 7 above, p. 78.

³⁸ For a discussion of these catalogues, see Boran, 'Libraries', pp. 5–7.

³⁹ This catalogue is MS 295, fols. 78r.–86v.

office for between 1 and 4 years, earning an annual salary of £2 5s. 0d. The duties of the Library Keeper were to be present in the Library when it was open, to supply books to those readers who did not have the right of access to the shelves and to add entries to the catalogue (or 'register'). Ussher received 2s. 6d. for paper and binding of the 'library register [*sic*]' and payments to his successors refer to 'keeping the library and the register', though Randall Holland was paid an additional six shillings in 1611 for 'making an index of Library books'.⁴⁰ Maintaining the fabric of the building also came within the Library Keeper's responsibilities; the Particular Book records payment to Ussher for 'a new lock to the library dore' and to Holland for mending a chain.⁴¹ At this period, students entered the College in their early teens, and so most of the first Library Keepers, as recent BAs, were probably still under twenty, a fact sometimes reflected in their behaviour. In 1612, Holland was fined 2 months' worth of Commons (meals) for being locked out of the College late at night and for entering by breaking a window in the Chapel – though this did not prevent him from retaining his post as Library Keeper for another 2 years, until he had taken his MA.⁴²

William Temple, who became Provost in 1609, was a man of prodigious administrative ability. Through careful financial management, he was able to fund an increase in the number of scholars to seventy and the Fellows to sixteen, of whom he designated seven as Senior Fellows and the remainder as Junior Fellows.⁴³ Salaries were increased in 1617, with that of the Library Keeper rising to £3 a year, that of the Bursar to £10, a Junior Fellow to £27, a Senior Fellow to £56 and the Provost to £100.⁴⁴ Temple's reforms included a codification of the statutes, undertaken in about 1615, but evidence of these now exists only in an incomplete form. It seems likely that they included changes to the regulations for the Library Keeper. In May 1618 John Garrald (or Fitzgerald), already an MA, was appointed to the office and was later required to sign a bond for £20 stating that he would 'looke diligently and carefully to the library of the said College, wherof he is appoynted the keeper'.⁴⁵ Garrald remained in office until at least 1625, by which time he had become a Fellow and, like most of those who were to follow him as College Librarians until the twentieth century, he held the post simultaneously with other offices, which in his case were those of Junior Fellow, Junior Dean and philosophy lecturer.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Smyly, pp. 168, 177. ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 169–70.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 167; MUN/P/7/1, quarter beginning 26 June 1614.

⁴³ Mahaffy, *Epoch*, pp. 160–9. ⁴⁴ MUN/P/7/1. ⁴⁵ MUN/LIB/10/6.

⁴⁶ MUN/P/7/1, quarter beginning March 1618 to MUN/P/7/12, quarter ending March 1625; MUN/P/1/152.

Temple died in January 1627 and was succeeded as Provost by William Bedell. On 19 August 1627, 3 days after Bedell was sworn in, the newly instituted Board Register recorded the decision that ‘the registers place and the custody of the Library is devolved to one of the senior ffellowes in perpetuum; his stipend is six pounds per annum.’⁴⁷ That arrangement fell into abeyance almost immediately, however, as within a year of his election Bedell began to revise Temple’s statutes. The new statutes, dated 24 September 1628, required the Librarian (*Bibliothecarius*) to be chosen not from among the Senior Fellows but from either the Junior Fellows or the scholars who had taken their BA or, if none were willing, from among the MAs.⁴⁸ The Bursar’s accounts record payments to an unnamed Library Keeper at the old rate of £3 a year from 1625 to 1628. After that, the new statutes notwithstanding, Thaddeus Lysaght simultaneously held the offices of Senior Fellow, Bursar, Library Keeper and Registrar. In 1631, he resigned and was followed by a succession of Junior Fellows, paid £3 a year.⁴⁹

The 1628 statute relating to the Library was included in that covering College property, where it was stated that, ‘of all the College goods, the books are most valuable.’⁵⁰ For that reason, the person chosen as Librarian was to be resident in the College, ‘careful . . . , given to study, and a lover of books’. He was to be elected on 20 November each year, along with the other College officers. His principal duties were to attend the Library daily from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m. and from 3 p.m. until 5 p.m. He was also to compile an annual ‘register’ of the books, ‘that it may appear what was lost the preceding year, and how’. Admission to the inner library continued to be restricted to the Provost, Fellows and Bachelors of Divinity, who were also permitted to borrow up to three books at a time, after depositing an appropriate security. Any borrower failing to return a book was obliged to replace it within a month or be fined twice its value. The outer library, to which books were fetched for readers by the Librarian, was open to ‘any others who have a mind to make use of the conveniency and benefit of the Library’. This category included readers from outside the College as well as its own undergraduates, and the statutes specified that books such as commentaries, ‘which are in frequent use with students’, could not be borrowed. If any book was discovered to be lost, a search of students’

⁴⁷ MUN/V/5/1, 19 August 1627.

⁴⁸ MS 760, transcribed in Mahaffy, *Epoch*, pp. 327–75. An English translation of the Library section of the Laudian statutes of 1637, which are almost identical to Bedell’s, is printed in Robert Bolton, *A translation of the charter and statutes of Trinity-College, Dublin. Together with the Library-statutes* (Dublin: Nelson, 1749), pp. 87–91.

⁴⁹ MUN/P/7/14–MUN/P/7/64. ⁵⁰ Bolton, note 48 above.

rooms was to be instigated and, if the book were not found, the Bursar was empowered to replace it and charge the cost to the Librarian's salary. Anyone found to have removed a book 'contrary to the rule' was barred from the Library for a month for a first offence, a year for a second and permanently for a third.⁵¹ This was not the only punishment meted out. For the theft of books, a scholar, Edmond Rawley, was obliged to make 'a publick confession of his fault in the Hall upon his knees'.⁵²

In 1637, the College statutes were revised again, this time by the Chancellor of the University, William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud introduced major changes, both constitutional and educational, but as far as the Library was concerned, the Bedell statutes remained almost unaltered, except that the opening hours were changed to 8–10 a.m. and 2–4 p.m.⁵³ In the same year the Board enacted a regulation that anyone who had borrowed a book and not returned it should be fined five shillings a week until the book was brought back.⁵⁴

By the early 1630s the number of students who were enrolled in the College exceeded the institution's ability to provide them with lodgings and, whilst some lived at home, others were accommodated in premises outside the walls, of which the most important was Kildare Hall, in Back Lane, close to Christchurch Cathedral. This possessed a collection of books for students' use and may also have been used for teaching. Lists of the books in the library there in 1633 contain around seventy titles.⁵⁵ By 1638, Trinity no longer used Kildare Hall, but in that year the College appealed to Wentworth, the Lord Deputy, seeking to initiate proceedings against a number of men who had borrowed and failed to return books from either the Hall or the College Library, or who owed debts to the College. The list included several who had been Fellows or MAs and had moved on to ecclesiastical posts, and others who may have been external readers, as their names do not appear in the register of College graduates. The list of those summoned to appear as witnesses included a Mr Barry, described as the 'keeper of the library' at Kildare Hall.⁵⁶

After the burst of activity in the first decade of the seventeenth century, there were comparatively few purchases during the rest of the 1600s, though the annual accounts for several years between 1617 and 1623 record a

⁵¹ *Ibid.* ⁵² MUN/V/5/1, 4 July 1629.

⁵³ *Charta, sive Literae Patentes, Caroli I* (13 Charles I), in *Chartae et statuta Collegii Sacrosanctae et Individuae Trinitatis Reginae Elizabethae juxta Dublin* (Dublin: Gill, 1844), pp. 80–4; Bolton, note 48 above.

⁵⁴ MUN/V/5/1, 7 June 1637. ⁵⁵ MS 2160/2 and 2a; Mahaffy, *Epoch*, pp. 213–18.

⁵⁶ MUN/LIB/10/7, reprinted in Mahaffy, *Epoch*, pp. 249–50.

modest level of expenditure on books.⁵⁷ There were equally few donations until after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, but the Library did receive the papers of Ambrose Ussher, bequeathed at his death in 1629 (MSS 285–91). These comprise commentaries, sermons and a number of his unpublished manuscripts on a range of subjects, including an Arabic dictionary and grammar, a partial translation of the Bible, and a political tract on the question of Scotland's union with England.

In selecting books for the College, Challoner and Ussher had been motivated by the desire to put together a library that would be comprehensive and scholarly, and not a mere ornament, but even by the first half of the seventeenth century it had become a part of the College which the Fellows proudly showed to visitors. Sir William Brereton, later to become a parliamentary general in the English Civil War, travelled through Ireland in 1637 and visited Dublin. He was taken to the Library and saw various manuscripts, including Bacon's *Opus maius*. The Fellows, he reported, 'glory much in their library', but, as an Oxford man no doubt familiar with the Bodleian, Brereton was surprisingly unimpressed, describing it as 'not large, well-contrived, nor well furnished with books'.⁵⁸ He was told that a new Library was to be built, though in fact it was to be almost another century before this dream was realised. Brereton also dined with James Ussher at his house in College Green, and was taken into his library, where he was shown the archbishop's collection of Waldensian manuscripts.

⁵⁷ E.g. MUN/P/1/109, MUN/P/1/118, MUN/P/1/119 and MUN/P/1/151.

⁵⁸ Sir William Brereton, *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces, England, Scotland and Ireland, 1634–1635*, ed. by Edward Hawkins (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1844), p. 143.

The first four decades of the seventeenth century were a time of relative peace and increasing prosperity for the fledgling College, but in 1641 all was to change, in the wake of the political upheavals under way across the water. Wentworth, the former Lord Deputy and later Earl of Strafford, was executed in May 1641. Four years later the same fate befell William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of the University of Dublin. In 1640, James Ussher, who was the Vice-Chancellor, as well as Archbishop of Armagh, made a routine visit to England, from which he never returned. Rebellion broke out in Ireland in October 1641, and the Provost, Richard Washington, along with several of the Fellows, followed the Vice-Chancellor to England. The College, which had already been forbidden by Parliament to elect any more Fellows, remained without a Provost until 1645. Throughout the anarchy of the 1640s it staggered on, receiving very few students and being forced to sell plate to survive, because many of its estates had fallen into the hands of the insurgents and income from rents had almost dried up. It received a little help from the government in the form of small grants, but these were hard won. One petition to the Lords Justices described the College as being in danger of having to be dissolved through poverty, and pleaded that, even if the scholars could not be kept together, ‘for the preservation of learning . . . at least the fabric of the house and public library may be preserved.’¹

From 1637 to 1641, the Library was in the care of John Bishop (or Bushop), who had been elected first a Fellow in June 1637 and then the Library Keeper a month later.² In November 1641 he was replaced by Richard Welsh (or Walsh), who – presumably because there were so few Fellows then available – was neither a Fellow, nor even an MA. He continued to serve until at least 1644, but seems to have been ineffectual as the custodian of the Library, as the statutes were ignored and considerable numbers of books were lost.³ The records contain a draft petition, dated April 1643, referring to the fact that ‘divers bookes of the Coledge Library are inbezeled and thence

¹ MUN/P/1/346. ² MUN/V/5/1, 7 June 1637; MUN/P/7/39–MUN/P/7/47.

³ MUN/V/5/2, 20 November 1641; MUN/P/1/342.

taken away and detained since and before the beginning of the Rebellion'.⁴ The petition noted that Ussher, as Vice-Chancellor, had appointed Edward Parry to be Pro-Vice-Chancellor with a particular responsibility to ensure that the statutes relating to the Library 'bee put in execution', and sought authority for Parry to nominate Fellows or graduates of the College resident in Dublin to search for books belonging to the Library anywhere in the College or city 'where they shall suspect any such bookes to bee'.⁵

By 1650, Trinity had reached a low point in its history, with Dublin ravaged by a plague that carried off half the population and the College almost closed. However, in that year Cromwell's government in Ireland seized the possessions of the see of Dublin and used the income to increase Trinity's endowments. They also appointed trustees with the authority to remove the Fellows and run the College according to the demands of the regime.⁶ As part of this cleansing process, the strongly puritan Samuel Winter was appointed as Provost. Winter, whose annual salary of £100 as Provost was supplemented by a further £200 as a state preacher, became a generous benefactor to the College, assisting poor students as well as donating 'a large sum of money disbursed out of his own purse' to provide books for the Library.⁷

Henry Jones

One of the few men to survive in office throughout this period was Henry Jones, who had succeeded his uncle, James Ussher, as Vice-Chancellor in 1646 and held the post until the Restoration. Jones was one of the Commissioners appointed after the rebellion of 1641 to investigate the claims of the dispossessed, an undertaking that led to the compilation of the 1641 Depositions, which were donated to Trinity by John Stearne a century later. In 1651, Jones spent £400 on refurbishing the Library with 'a faire staire case, windows, classes, seates, and other ornaments'.⁸ It was long assumed that the two staircases now at the west end of the Long Room were those that had been donated by Jones and that they had been moved from the old Library, but this has now been disproved.⁹ Jones' contribution was commemorated on a brass plaque which was placed above the door to the original building

⁴ MS 2160/14. ⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ T. C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland: English government and reform in Ireland 1649–60* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 198–211; Mahaffy, *Epoch*, pp. 293–5.

⁷ J.W., *The life and death of the eminently learned, pious, and painful minister of the Gospel, Dr Samuel Winter* (London: Parkhurst, 1671), p. 36.

⁸ MS 571, fol. 3v. ⁹ See below, p. 64.

and is now in the Old Library.¹⁰ Generous though this benefaction was, it was later dwarfed by his gifts of what were to become the College's two greatest treasures, the Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow.

Several misconceptions about both of these manuscripts survived into the nineteenth century. Both were associated with – or, indeed, were thought to have been written by – Colum Cille (St Columba), but the Book of Durrow is now normally dated to the late seventh century, a hundred years after the death of the saint, and the Book of Kells was produced at least another century later. It was also thought that they formed part of Archbishop Ussher's library but, though they arrived in Trinity within a few years of the Primate's books and manuscripts, the evidence points to Ussher having studied both without possessing either.¹¹

The Book of Kells (MS 58) is the most lavishly decorated of the surviving Gospel manuscripts produced by Irish monks between the seventh and ninth centuries.¹² The main text is that of the Gospels in Latin, preceded by canon tables (concordances of Gospel passages) and *breves causae* (summaries of the narratives). Each Gospel is introduced by a full-page symbol of the evangelist and there are other pages with portraits of Christ and scenes from his life. As well as these great illustrated pages, the wealth of decorated initials and interlinear drawings is unparalleled. Almost every page contains 'writhing, chasing, struggling, frolicking creatures, now hiding, now scampering between the lines, filling the gaps at the ends of paragraphs'.¹³ The manuscript is thought to have been written around the year 800, either in the Columban monastery of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland, or in Kells, County Meath, to which the monks moved after the sack of Iona by Vikings in 806, or – perhaps more likely – it was begun in Iona and brought to Kells for completion. The manuscript remained in Kells throughout the Middle Ages and, according to the Annals of Ulster, it was stolen from the church there in 1007 because of the heavily ornamented *cumdach* (shrine) in which it was kept. It was found 3 months later, buried in the ground and without the *cumdach*. It remained in Kells, where, in the twelfth century, property transactions were recorded in previously blank spaces. The town

¹⁰ F. Elrington Ball, 'Extracts from the journal of Thomas Dineley or Dingley, Esquire, giving some account of his visit to Ireland in the reign of Charles II', *JRSAI*, 43 (1913), 275–309.

¹¹ Aubrey Gwynn, 'Some notes on the history of the Book of Kells', *Irish Historical Studies*, 9 (1954), 131–61; Bernard Meehan, 'The history of the manuscript', in *Kells facsimile*, pp. 317–29.

¹² For recent scholarship, see *Kells facsimile*, which contains a comprehensive bibliography; F. O'Mahony, ed., *The Book of Kells: proceedings of a conference at Trinity College Dublin, 6–9 September 1992* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1994); Carol Farr, *The Book of Kells: its function and audience* (London: British Library, 1997); and Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012).

¹³ George Otto Simms, 'Early Christian manuscripts', in *Treasures*, pp. 38–56 (p. 44).