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Philip Gaskell

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Philip Gaskell (1926–2001) acknowledges in his Preface that ‘one period in the history of one college library may not seem much of a subject for a book’, but, as his 1980 study shows, Trinity College Library has a history well worth investigating. Gaskell, a former Librarian and Fellow of Trinity College, details how this library grew from small beginnings in the mid-sixteenth century into arguably the greatest of all Oxford and Cambridge college libraries. He links the growth of the library to the intellectual life of the college at that time, outlining the achievements of a number of eminent Trinity men in advancing England’s spiritual, intellectual and scientific development: Cartwright, Whitgift, Coke, Bacon, Essex, George Herbert, Ray, Barrow and Newton. This is a fascinating insight into the early history and accumulation of a college library now outstandingly rich both in contents and in setting.

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*The Sandars Lectures 1978-9*

PHILIP GASKELL



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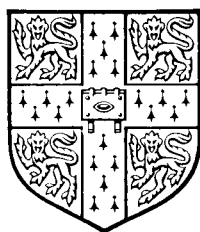
# TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY

## *The first 150 years*

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THE SANDARS LECTURES

1978–9



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To the memory of  
H. S. Bennett  
1889–1972  
Librarian of Emmanuel  
and  
A. N. L. Munby  
1913–1974  
Librarian of King's



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## PREFACE

One period in the history of one College Library may not seem much of a subject for a book, but there are two reasons why it is worth investigating the early history of Trinity College Library in some detail. One is that a number of Trinity men – more perhaps than of the members of any other college – contributed importantly to England's spiritual, intellectual, and scientific development from soon after the foundation of the college in 1546 until the end of the seventeenth century,<sup>1</sup> so that the state of its working library during this period is of unusual interest. The other reason is that the investigation helps to illuminate the process whereby Trinity Library grew from small beginnings into the greatest of all the Oxford and Cambridge college libraries, rich both in contents and in setting.

To summarise the story: it appears that in 1546 Trinity inherited the libraries of its two constituent colleges, Michaelhouse and the King's Hall, but that Trinity was amongst those colleges which parted with virtually the whole of their pre-Reformation libraries during the religious upsets of the mid-century, so that scarcely any trace of its founding collections survived into the seventeenth century. There is in fact very little that we know for certain about the contents of Trinity's Library in the sixteenth century, though we can infer a good deal from the small and uneven collection of books which the College owned in 1600. Then the Library contained only about 325 volumes of printed books altogether, including a recently acquired collection of law books. Of the rest, about 250 volumes, two-thirds were divinity books, and no other subject was even remotely well covered. Most of the 250 had probably been in the Library since the 1560s. Since Trinity could easily have afforded to

<sup>1</sup> The most eminent of the early Trinity men were Cartwright, Whitgift, Coke, Bacon, Essex, George Herbert, Ray, Barrow, and Newton; but there were many others of only relatively less distinction.

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build up its Library into something more useful during the later sixteenth century, this situation appears to have been acceptable to the College. Meanwhile the Fellows met their need for academic books by assembling substantial private libraries. There was no College Librarian.

The seventeenth century saw great and rapid changes. A new library apartment was completed as part of the Great Court in about 1604, and a College Librarianship was established in 1608. From then until the 1640s the book stock was quickly and purposefully built up. First came the gifts of superb monastic manuscripts which are still the Library's most spectacular treasures, and they were followed by a steady flow of academic printed books, a majority of them given by members of the College and other well-wishers, but a substantial minority chosen and bought by the College with its own funds and with money given for the purchase of library books. There was still a preponderance of divinity books in the Library, but other subject groups were deliberately improved as well, including the science sections. The later part of the seventeenth century, finally, was a time of consolidation, when the College paid more attention to organising and cataloguing the collections than to refining their contents, though there were further gifts of books. By the 1670s the Library in the Great Court was considered to be inadequate, and the College took the opportunity to complete Nevile's Court with a splendid new Library. The period ends with the removal of the books from the Great Court Library to the Wren in 1695.

There is unfortunately no large-scale general history of Trinity College to which this account could be referred. Of the short histories of the College the best are Rouse Ball, W. W., *Notes on the History of Trinity College, Cambridge*, London 1899, and Trevelyan, G. M., *Trinity College, an historical sketch*, Cambridge 1943, reprinted with additions 1972; and see also Rouse Ball's *Cambridge notes*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1921, and vol. iii of the *Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire*, London 1959. Willis, R., and Clark, J. W., *The architectural history of the University of Cambridge*, 4 vols, Cambridge 1886, is essential; and it is supplemented by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments' *Inventory of historical monuments in the City of Cambridge*, 4 vols, London 1959. There is a sketchy history of the Library in Sinker, R., *The Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, Cambridge 1891; much more valuable is Sinker's scholarly *Biographical notes on the Librarians of Trinity College*, Cambridge 1897. The immediate predecessor of the present work is Gaskell, P., and Robson, R., *The Library of Trinity*

*College, Cambridge: a short history*, Cambridge 1971, the first part of which is now superseded.<sup>1</sup>

I am left with the pleasant task of acknowledging the advice and encouragement I have received from friendly experts, and of thanking them all warmly and sincerely. I was able to benefit from Bruce Purvis's work on the contents of Trinity College Library in the seventeenth century; and Elizabeth Leedham-Green's immense knowledge of the sixteenth-century Vice-Chancellors' Court records was essential to the investigation of the Fellows' private libraries. I was most fortunate in being given advice on the contents of particular sections of the Library by Gale Christianson, Rupert Hall, P. M. Rattansi, and Charles Webster (the science sections); by Shirley and Oliver Letwin, and Mary Ann Radzinowicz (the divinity and philosophy sections); by E. J. Kenney (the classics section); by Brian Wormald (the history section); and by Walter Ullmann (the law section). I was also generously helped with a variety of particular problems by Helen Baron, Roger Dawe, John and Pat Easterling, Neil Ker, David McKittrick, J. G. Pollard, Harry Porter, John Oates, and Quentin Skinner. Rosemary Graham and Robert Robson were kind enough to read my manuscript and make detailed criticisms. I am grateful, finally, to the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, and to the Syndics of Cambridge University Library, for permission to use and quote from copyright documents.

Trinity College  
 Cambridge  
 1976-9

PHILIP GASKELL

<sup>1</sup> The present investigation has suggested the following amendments to Gaskell and Robson: Gaskell and Robson p. 6: it appears to have been Michaelhouse Library, not King's Hall Library, that served as Trinity College Library in the sixteenth century (pp. 20-1 below). Gaskell and Robson p. 7: Trinity's library books were chained in the sixteenth century, and unchained in 1604 (pp. 29, 71, 101). Gaskell and Robson p. 8: there were only about 325 volumes in the College Library in 1600 (p. 38). Gaskell and Robson p. 8: the sixteenth-century 'Library Keeper' was the fore-runner not of Stanhope's Librarians, but of the seventeenth-century Sub-Librarians (pp. 26-7). Gaskell and Robson p. 10: for a revised account of the book stock in 1667, see Chapter 15, below. There was a collection of law books in the Library, but it was not catalogued. Gaskell and Robson p. 11: although there was no regular allocation from endowment income for the purchase of library books in the seventeenth century, allocations were at least occasionally made from room rents (pp. 123-4). Gaskell and Robson p. 12: the finding list (Add. MS a.103) was made in about 1640, not in about 1675-6 (Appendix B). Gaskell and Robson p. 28: the 'efficient new catalogues' (Add. MS a.109, 127-8) were begun not in 1739-40 but around 1700 (p. 142).

# TERMS AND CONVENTIONS

<i>libraries</i> (general term)	
<i>library</i>	a library apartment or building and the collection of library books in it
<i>the Old Library</i>	TCL 1546–c.1604, location unknown
<i>the New Library</i>	TCL c.1604–1695, in the Great Court
<i>the Wren Library</i>	TCL from 1695, in Neville’s Court
<i>books</i> (general term)	
<i>item</i>	a book as a bibliographical unit; a single manuscript, a copy of a printed edition
<i>volume</i>	a book as a physical unit; one volume may contain one item, or part of an item, or several items
<i>title</i>	a specific entry in a book list
<i>catalogues</i> (general term)	
<i>inventory</i>	a list of books, giving only the first or chief work in each volume
<i>shelf-list</i>	a list of books in shelf order
<i>finding list</i>	a list of books with locations
<i>catalogue</i>	a list of books in class order ( <i>class catalogue</i> ) or in alphabetical order of headings ( <i>author catalogue</i> ), with locations

As far as possible, authors’ names and other headings follow Adams.



ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used:

Adams	Adams, H.M., <i>Catalogue of books printed on the continent of Europe, 1501–1600, in Cambridge libraries</i> , 2 vols, Cambridge 1967
Ben	TCL <i>Benefactions book</i> , ff. 1–30 of TC Add. MS a.106 (references are to the early manuscript pagination)
BL	The British Library
BM	The British Museum
CAS Com.	<i>Cambridge Antiquarian Society Communications</i>
CAS Proc.	<i>Cambridge Antiquarian Society Proceedings</i>
CUA	Cambridge University Archives (in Cambridge University Library)
CUL	Cambridge University Library
DNB	<i>The dictionary of national biography</i> , 2nd ed., London 1908–12
Don	TCL ‘catalogue of books given to Trinity College’, TC Add. MS a.150
Gaskell and Robson	Gaskell, P., and Robson, R., <i>The Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: a short history</i> , Cambridge 1971
Goff	Goff, F.R., <i>Incunabula in American libraries</i> , New York 1964
Innes	Innes, H.M., <i>Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge</i> , Cambridge 1941
James	James, M.R., <i>The western manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge</i> , 4 vols, Cambridge 1900–4

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JB	Junior Bursar
Loggan 1688	Loggan, D., view of Trinity College, c.1688, in <i>Cantabrigia illustrata</i> , Cambridge [1690]
<i>Mem, Memoriale</i>	<i>Memoriale Collegio Sanctae et Individuae Trinitatis in Academia Cantabrigiensi dicatum</i> , 1614, TC MS R.17.8 (references are to the early manuscript pagination)
Mullinger	Mullinger, J.B., <i>The University of Cambridge</i> , 3 vols, Cambridge 1873–1911
OED	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>Old plans</i>	Clark, J.W., and Gray, A., <i>Old plans of Cambridge, 1574–1798</i> , 2 vols, Cambridge 1921
PRO	The Public Record Office
SB	Senior Bursar
Sinker, <i>Librarians</i>	Sinker, R., <i>Biographical notes on the Librarians of Trinity College on Sir Edward Stanhope's foundation</i> , Cambridge 1897
STC	Pollard, A.W., and Regrave, G.R., <i>A short-title catalogue of books printed in England [etc.] 1475–1640</i> , London 1926 (2nd ed. in progress)
TC	Trinity College, Cambridge
<i>TC Admissions</i>	Rouse Ball, W.W., and Venn, J.A., <i>Admissions to Trinity College, Cambridge</i> , 5 vols, London 1913–16
TCL	Trinity College Library
TC Mun.	Trinity College Muniments
<i>Trans. Camb. Bib. Soc.</i>	<i>Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society</i>
Venn	Venn, J. and J.A., <i>Alumni Cantabrigienses</i> , Part I to 1751, 4 vols, Cambridge 1922–7
VCC	Vice-Chancellor's Court
VCH	The Victoria County History
Willis and Clark	Willis, R., and Clark, J.W., <i>The architectural history of the University of Cambridge</i> , 4 vols, Cambridge 1886
Wing	Wing, D.G., <i>Short-title catalogue of books printed in England [etc.] 1641–1700</i> , 3 vols, New York 1945 (2nd ed. in progress)
Wormald and Wright	Wormald, F., and Wright, C.E., <i>The English library before 1700</i> , London 1958

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1640	TCL finding list, TC Add. MS a.103
1645	TCL draft class catalogue, c.1645–8, BL MS Sloane 78, ff. 139 <sup>a</sup> –154 <sup>a</sup>
1667	TCL indexed class catalogue, 1667–c.1675, TC Add. MS a.101
1675	TCL indexed class catalogue, c.1675–1695, TC Add. MS a.104