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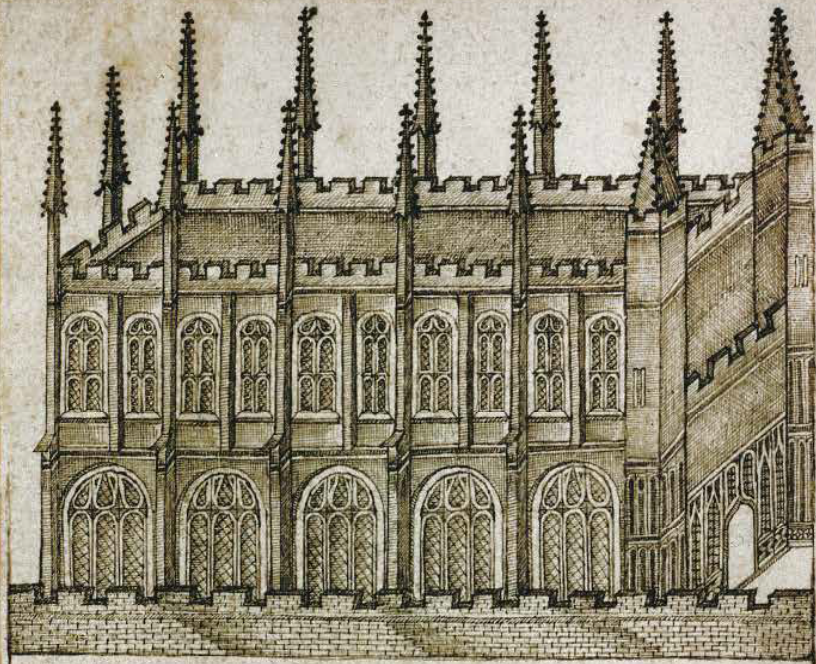
## Preface

Writing the history of an institution that has flourished for over four hundred years is a challenging project, but for the Bodleian Library the task is greatly facilitated by the seminal works of three earlier historians: William Dunn Macray, Sir Edmund Craster and Ian Philip. Macray's *Annals of the Bodleian Library Oxford* (2nd edn, 1890), Craster's *History of the Bodleian Library 1845–1945* (1952, repr. 1981) and Philip's Lyell lectures *The Bodleian Library in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1983) are all invaluable sources and all supply much more factual detail than this brief account can provide for the period up to 1945. My debt to them all will be obvious to those who are familiar with their classic works. For the years since the end of the Second World War, I have relied on the library's well-preserved archives, on the record of developments regularly reported in the notes and news section of the *Bodleian Library Record*, on the recollections of colleagues and above all on the knowledge and advice of David Vaisey, Bodley's Librarian Emeritus.

Mary Clapinson  
St Hugh's College, Oxford

## Note to the revised edition

This revised and expanded edition of *A Brief History of the Bodleian Library* provides additional material on the university's medieval library and on the growth of Sir Thomas Bodley's foundation over the following centuries. It also brings the account up to date with details of recent developments, and is enhanced by the addition of a great many more illustrations of the Library's collections, buildings, staff and benefactors.



rell. *Emmet, & media fastigia suspirat urbis,  
Dux Humfrede, tuis sumptibus ista schola.  
Surgit in immensum turritis undiq; pinnis.  
Sertaq; perpulchro marmore quadra domus.  
Splendida lumibus trebris laquearia fulgent,  
Artificumq; nitent pendula saxa manu.*

*Cæpit sub Henrico 6<sup>o</sup> per dominum Humfredum  
Ducem Glocestrie. Anno domini. 1441.*

## CHAPTER I

## The first university library

**I**N 1320 THE BISHOP of Worcester, Thomas Cobham, gave money to Oxford University for the construction of a two-storey building adjoining the University Church of St Mary's on the High Street.<sup>1</sup> As a young man Cobham had studied arts in Paris, canon law in Oxford and theology in Cambridge before entering the king's service as a diplomat, where he developed an unrivalled expertise in French affairs. He intended the new building to provide a centre for the administration of the university, with a room on the ground floor for meetings of its governing body (Congregation) and a library room above (fig. 2). When Cobham died in 1327 the building was far from finished, but he bequeathed to the university 400 marks to contribute to the cost of finishing it. Unfortunately, his own library, which he also left to the university, had to be pawned to pay for his funeral expenses, as he died heavily in debt. Adam de Brome, rector of St Mary's, redeemed the books, and gave them to the hall he had recently founded (which later became Oriel College) to form a library for the students there. Although the university took possession of the books in 1337, their ownership was a matter of dispute with Oriel College for decades. It was probably in 1367 that Cobham's books were, as decreed in a

Fig. 1 John Bereblock's drawing of the library building in 1566, with the then empty Duke Humfrey's Library above the Divinity School.

## The early years, 1602–1652

**I**N 1598, AT THE AGE OF 53, Thomas Bodley was still ambitious to seek influence in another sphere in which to ‘doe the true part of a profitable member of the State’,<sup>1</sup> as he put it in his autobiography. He rightly reckoned that his scholarly and linguistic background and his diplomatic experience would be useful assets, and we know that he had sufficient means to finance the enterprise, for he had not only inherited a modest fortune from his father but had also married a rich widow. His wife Ann’s first husband, John Ball, a wealthy merchant and mayor of Totnes in Devon, had died in March 1586, leaving her with seven children (the eldest of whom was only 12) and a considerable fortune amassed through trade with northern France. Bodley married Ann Ball in July 1586, and it was to a large extent her fortune that enabled him to turn his attention to his old university and in particular to the restoration of its library ‘which then in every part lay ruined and wast[e]’.<sup>2</sup> Later historians were to point out the irony of a library so closely associated in its early years with Protestant theology having been founded with money made by selling pilchards to Catholic France.

Writing to the vice-chancellor in February 1598, Bodley offered to rectify this sorry state of affairs, and ‘to take the charge and cost’<sup>3</sup> of

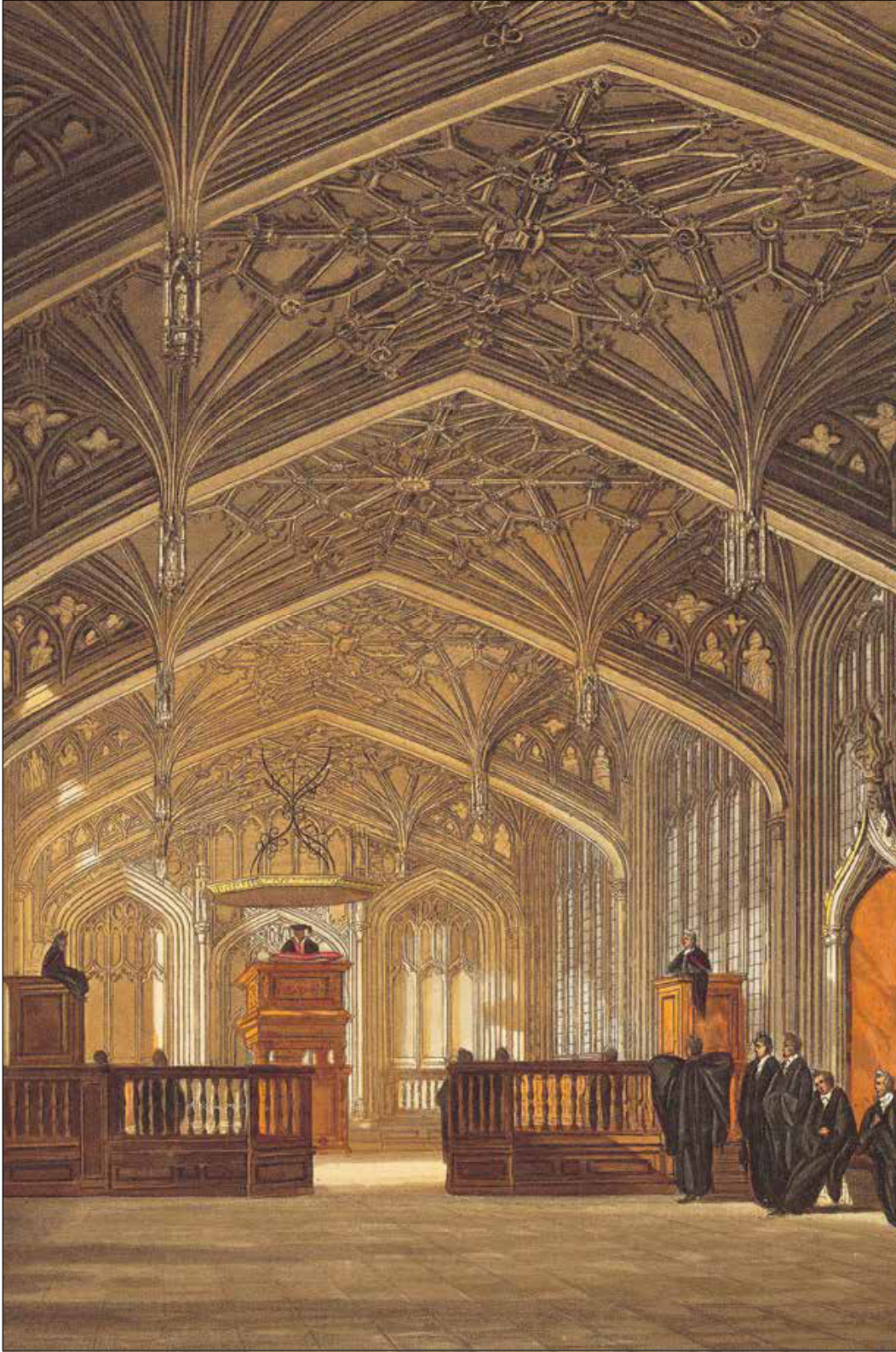
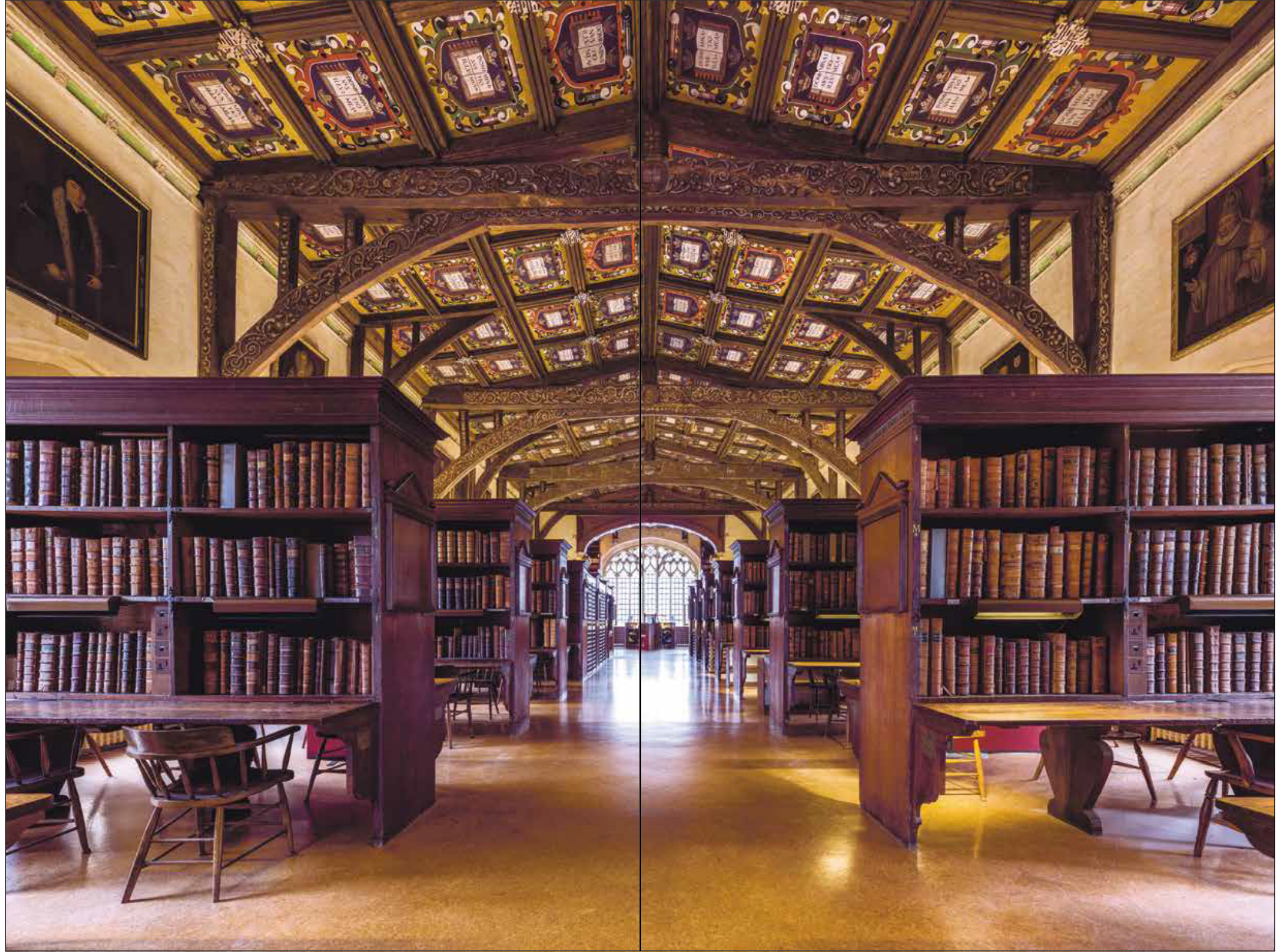


Fig. 9 The Divinity School from William Combe, *A History of the University of Oxford* (1814).



- Fos. Langij Polytechnia. fo. Lugd. 1604.  
 A. Vesalini de usu radice Chyme. fo. Bas. 1545.  
 Rodericus à Castro de vniuersa mulierum medicina. fo. Hamb. 1602.  
 And. de Ilermia in vsu Fendorum Comment. fo. 1597.  
 Jac. Griseferi exercitationes Theologicæ. 4. Ing. 1604.  
 Collegium Contimbricense in Aristi Logicam. 4. 1604.  
 Luc. Oslandri Epitome Historie Ecclesiæ. Centurie reliquæ ix. x. &c. 4. Tub. 1604.  
 Rob. Maranta Consilia. 4. Col. 1599.  
 C. Sigonius de reb. Bononiensib. fo. Franc. 1604.  
 La Bibliothèque du Sieur de la Grèce-du-main. fo. Par. 1584.  
 Canisj Antiquæ lectionis to. 3. 4. Ing. 1604.  
 Jo. Philippus Ingrassias in Galenum de Osib. fo.

GEORGIUS SAYNTROLL Miles,  
 donauit xx. libras, quibus empti  
 sunt hi libri:



Novum Testamentum cum  
 Annot. & editione Galt.  
 Deleni Bibliopoli regis  
 Angliæ. 4. Lond. 1540.  
 Euangelia & Epist. lingua  
 Slavonica. 4.

- Les Annales de Pologne per B. de Vigenere. 4. Par. 1573.  
 Ant. Fabri Rationalia in Pandectas. fo. S. Ger. 1604.  
 La Conference des Costumes de France par Pierre Guenois 2. vol. fo. Par. 1596.  
 Guil. Gilbertus de Magnete. fo. Lond. 1600.  
 Er. Oswaldus Schreckenfelsius in Sphæram Io. de Sacrobusto. fo. Bas. 1569.  
 Seb. Münsteri Rudimenta Mathematica. fo. Bas. 1551.  
 Jo. Bapt. Coila de Falli scientia & ignorantia. fo. Pap. 1603.  
 Limbotten bus Discourses of Voyages into the East and West Indies. fo. Lond.  
 fo. à Waver de Polymathia. 4. Bas. 1602.

- Discorso armonico di Herc. Bottrigaro. 4. Fer. 1602.  
 Stronatus Proverbiorum Grecorum per Jof. Scalgerum. 4. Leid. 1600.  
 C. Dibnadij in Geometriam Euclidis Demon. stratio lineali. 4. Arn. 1603.  
 Eiusdem in eundem Demonstratio numerali ab Astrolabij Canonibus quo primi mobilis motus de. prehenduntur. 4. Ven. 1502.  
 Rich. Knoller Generali Historie of the Turke. fo. Lond. 1603.  
 Statuta Agricultura vrbis per Serapium & al. 01. 4. Rom. 1595.  
 Fr. à Christo in 3. lib. Sententiarum. fo. Con. 1586.  
 Il Riposo de Resaello Borgini. 8. Fior. 1584.  
 Pet. Sacratius in 33. Psalm. cum quibusdam Homilij. 8. Bon. 1588.  
 Gr. Cortesij Epistole & Tract. contra negantem Petrum Apost. fuisse Romæ. 4. Ven. 1573.  
 Fr. Panigarolla Disceptationes Calvinicæ. 4. Med. 1594.  
 An. Montererentij Scholia ad Statuta iam Ci. uilibus quam Criminalia Cuit. Bononiæ. fo. Bon. 1582.  
 Imprese illustri di ca. Camilli. 4. Ven. 1585.  
 Balubasaria Etzelij Florilegia Chryostomi. 4. Mog. 1603.  
 Alf. Salmeronis tomus 6. 7. 8. fo. Col. 1602.  
 Porphyrius de Abstinentia ab usu animalium Lat. 4. 1547.  
 Statuta Iaderina. 4. Ven. 1564.  
 Lettere di Anibal Caro. 4. Ven. 1597.  
 Il Consolato del Mare, col Portolano del Mare. 4. Ven. 1599.  
 Lettere di Luigi Groto. 4. Ven. 1601.  
 Tempio al Card. Cuth. Aldobrandini. 4. Bol. 1600.  
 Jo. Baccho Anglicus super sententias 2. vol. fo. Bas. 1510.  
 Venantij Honorij Clementiani &c. Carmus. Mog. 1603.  
 Polycarpi Lyseri Adamus. 4. Lips. 1604.  
 Christ. Pelargus in Exortum. 4. Lips. 1604.  
 Sermones B. Umberti. 4. Ven. 1602.

As

- Alia Bapt. Grimay. 4. Ant. 1604.  
 Jo. Hier. Pulcrinus de cœmudu frogalis huma. ni corpora morbus. fo. Ven. 1600.  
 Maur. Cordens in 1. lib. Hip. de Morbu Mul. licum. fo. Par. 1585.  
 Doliuonorum virorum Comment. in Casullum Tibul. & Propert. fo. Lut. 1604.  
 Philippi Scherbij Theses Philosophicæ. 4. 1603.  
 Gio. Marinello delle copie delle parole 2. vol. Ven. 1602.  
 Remigius Alisiodorensis & Vartenius in Psal. fo.  
 Ant. Butrius in 6. Decret. fo. Ven. 1575.  
 Q. Horatius cum Comment. Ad. Turnebi. fo. Par. 1605.  
 Di Bart. Dionij parte 5. delle Historie di Tar. cagnosa. 4. Ven. 1603.  
 Meditationes in Theriacam & Metbridicam Antidotum. 4. Ven. 1576.

DONUM ROBERTI BARKER REGIE  
 MAiestatis Typographi.



Rogentis Homilia super vet.  
 Testamentum. fo. MS.  
 The new Testament, with  
 some parts of the old in  
 ancient English. fo.

- The Mirrour of the world  
 written by a Friar at the instance of King  
 Philip of France. An. 1289. fo. MS.  
 Four books of Honour Militarie & Civil. fo.  
 Lond. 1602.  
 Fr. Genzaga de Origine Scenaphice Re.  
 ligionis Franciscana. fo. Rom. 1587.

DONUM GUIL. BALLOW ACADEMIÆ  
 PERVNIATORIS.

- Anquilin<sup>o</sup> de non parando. fo. MS. De  
 verb. hinc hinc non inueniuntur. De  
 verbo Termini & Anquilin. Ad fratres  
 in Erone. Epistola ad Julianum Co.  
 miton. De igne purgatorio.

- De re, dogis et de p. preceptis. De qua.  
 dia & supplicat. d. uinatore. Simulac.  
 confectio. Sermo Aug. de tremendo  
 Iudicio. De christate. De fuga  
 mulierum. Sermo ad parochianos.  
 Epistole varie Hieronymi ad Iulianum.  
 Notabilia excerpta de epistolis Hiero.  
 nyymi. Aug. de perfectione iustitie.  
 De vita christiana. Eiusdem medita.  
 tiones de dilectione dei. De decimis  
 reddendis. Expositio S. Bernardi su.  
 per Magnificat. Stuarton de laule.  
 B. Maria. Dilectio bonæ per  
 Alphabetum.  
 Aug. sup. Gen. ad literam. fo. MS.  
 Doctus de belemadib. Aug. de tri.  
 nitate. De vera religione. De  
 libris arduis. De naturis homi.  
 ni. De naturis et gaudiis. Liber expositio.  
 tionis. De preceptis dei ad Parthe.  
 num. De fide ad Petrum. De  
 predestinatione. De gratia & libere  
 arbitrio. Ad inquisitiones Henrici.  
 De fide & simbolo. Sermo ad iuue.  
 nes. De cura gerenda sui corporis.  
 De meritis ecclesie et Monachorum.  
 Hyeronim. Contra Epistola Mani.  
 chæ. De mendaciis. Contra ne.  
 lationem. De duabus animis. De  
 uisibile dei. Ad Macchæum.  
 Solibi. De assumptione B. virginis.  
 Epist. ad Volosian. De vicijs.  
 Sermo Ambrosij de adiuuante. Ser.  
 monis in mente. De adulterio. Co.  
 rinth. De utilitate credendi. De

parish priests, contrary to statute until the prohibition was eventually removed with the revision of the library statutes in 1847. The sub-librarian was to be in attendance in the library ‘to share in his [the librarian’s] toils’, principally the cataloguing, and to ‘have some acquaintance with the tongues’. A porter – ‘some needy and honest man’ – was also to be appointed by the librarian ‘to clean the books, and sweep the library, and to brush the tables, closets, seats, screens, windows, and in short, all the places which are sullied by dust or through disuse’.<sup>24</sup>

Bodley diverged from earlier library regulations in prohibiting the lending of books. He was convinced that one of the main reasons for the demise of the university’s fifteenth-century library was that readers had been allowed to borrow books and manuscripts without there being any mechanism for enforcing the return of the items they had borrowed. Several times in his letters to Thomas James, Bodley stressed that this was not a matter that was open for negotiation. In July 1605 he wrote firmly: ‘The lending of any booke out of the Librarie may be assented to by no means; neither is it a mater that the Universitie or Vicechancelour are to deale in.’<sup>25</sup> Again in March 1610 he refused to contemplate a loan that his librarian requested on behalf of a reader: ‘For still the like may be alleaged [a precedent] in other cases hereafter, to the abuse of all good order, & totall ruine of the Librarie.’<sup>26</sup> When the provost of Oriel College asked to borrow a book, Bodley again turned down the request, but he followed up his refusal by sending from London a book on the same subject, instructing Thomas James to give it to the provost and to ask him to donate the volume to the library when he had finished with it – a neat way of satisfying the provost’s needs without breaking the library’s rules.

Despite the strict enforcement of the no-borrowing rule and the fact that all the larger volumes were securely chained to the shelves, there is evidence that books did occasionally go astray. A Mr Yates of New College was accused in November 1613 of not returning to the sub-librarian a book that had been fetched for him from the gallery in Arts End. He admitted the offence, was ordered to provide a replacement copy and ‘promised so to do’.<sup>27</sup> Bodley was convinced that the greatest risk of what he called ‘embezzlement’ of the books was in the interval between their arrival in the library and their being placed on the shelves. He more than once urged Thomas James to choose

only trustworthy scholars to help with the task of carrying up to the library the new books that were sent from London, especially when the consignment included small volumes in fine bindings. As for the larger (folio) books, James was instructed to have the smith on hand to chain them immediately on arrival, and to close the library to readers until the job was completed. From the outset, the folios were arranged alphabetically by author within each of the four faculties of Arts, Law, Medicine and Theology, and chained to the book presses. As early as 1605, Bodley was having some smaller (quarto) books that were expected to be heavily used bound in leather to facilitate chaining them among the folios, thus making them more readily accessible to readers than those bound in vellum that were kept in the cupboards and later in the galleries and had to be fetched by the librarian.

Thomas Bodley wanted his library to be a resource not only for his own university, but also for the scholarly world at large. In early discussions with the university about who should be entitled to use it, he agreed that there would have to be some restrictions on access, to ensure ‘the ease of the Keeper [i.e. the librarian], the quietnesse of the students, the securitie of the books and the Honor and dignitie of the University’; otherwise the ‘popular sort’ would daily pester the room ‘with their gazing, and babbling, and trampling up and down’ and ‘disturb out of all measure the endeavours of those that are studious’.<sup>28</sup> But he insisted that bona fide scholars from outside Oxford should be allowed to study in the library, once they had gone through the formalities of requesting permission and had taken the library oath, ‘in order that study in any science may be the more happily advanced’, as the first library statutes, drafted by Bodley, expressed it in 1610.<sup>29</sup> Many students from Cambridge, the Scottish universities and the London Inns of Court registered as readers in the early years. Bodley dissuaded the university from requiring caution money from visiting scholars as savouring ‘of discourtesie’.<sup>30</sup> As for members of Oxford University, the university itself was not inclined to allow its more junior members to use the library – and the privilege was originally restricted to men who were already Masters of Arts, or Doctors or Bachelors of Divinity, Medicine or Law. In December 1602 Bodley wrote to James that he had been asked by a very good friend to help get a young Bachelor of Arts admitted as a reader, ‘which I would willingly doe at the instance of his frindes ... but sith it is thought fitte by the Universitie, that Bachelers

the autumn of 1612 (fig. 21). It was the first example in England of a new type of library design – the walls shelved from floor to ceiling, with a gallery giving access to the upper half – and was in marked contrast to the traditional fittings in the original library room, with its book presses and desks at right angles to the walls between the windows, making best use of the available natural light for reading. The shelving in Arts End is evidence of the need to provide storage for the ever-increasing number of books that were rolling off the printing presses of the western world, and that the Bodleian was acquiring both from benefactors and from the Stationers' Company of London.

On the ground floor below Arts End the Proscholium provided an elegant entrance hall to the Divinity School (fig. 22). Bodley then directed his energies to persuading the university to raise money for the addition of three more ranges of buildings to form a quadrangle. He planned that these would, on the ground and first floors, provide rooms for teaching in the university faculties or 'schools', replacing the dilapidated houses adjoining the Divinity School, and on the second floor house his expanding library. The names of these schools were painted above the doorways, recording in Latin the range of subjects taught in the seventeenth-century university – jurisprudence, anatomy, metaphysics, moral philosophy, natural philosophy, languages, grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy – in addition to theology, which continued to be taught in the fifteenth-century Divinity School. But Sir Thomas did not live to see his plan materialize: the foundation stone of what came to be known as the 'Schools Quadrangle' was laid on 30 March 1613, the day after his funeral (fig. 23). By then his library contained some 15,000 separate works, bound into about 7,000 volumes. The collection included several hundred manuscripts, the most important of them medieval ones that had passed into private hands at the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s and then been transferred as gifts to the safer haven of the Bodleian.

Fig. 21 (previous spread) Arts End, completed in 1612, was fitted with shelves from floor to ceiling to house the library's ever-increasing collections.

Fig. 22 (opposite) Engraving of the Proscholium, completed in 1612, which served as an elegant entrance hall to the Divinity School. From James Ingram, *Memorials of Oxford*, vol. 2 (1836).

