THE NEW LIBRARY AT
THE QUEEN’S COLLEGE
It gives me great pleasure to write about the New Library, its importance and the difference it will make to future generations of students, scholars and academics at Queen’s.

It has taken many years to reach this point, but Queen’s now enjoys one of the largest libraries in Oxford, comprising the best of the 17th, 19th and 21st centuries. We are immensely proud of the outstanding research and study facilities now available within College and we are deeply grateful to Old Members and Friends who have together given just over £5 million in support of this important College development. Thank you.

Queen’s now has a truly accessible research centre with a wide range of source material, from medieval manuscripts to the latest digital resources. Our nationally recognised historic collection is now stored with the College Archive in optimum conditions. We have inspiring exhibition spaces and a dedicated reading room to ensure that these treasures are used and appreciated.

The new reader spaces are very popular with current students, and I understand that potential applicants visiting Queen’s have been inspired by the variety of study options now on offer. Whether one wishes to work alongside others or alone, sitting or standing, there is something for everyone – and during the busy exam period in Trinity Term there were always some seats free, unheard of for many years.

Thanks are due to many people and organisations including, outside these walls, the visionary Rick Mather Architects (this was one of the last projects designed by founding partner Rick Mather) and Beard Construction. Within College, Clerk of Works David Goddard and Librarian Amanda Saville and their teams have worked enormously hard over a number of years to bring this project to fruition, and overall guidance has been given by Becky Beasley, the Fellow Librarian.

Extending and modernising the library has affirmed its rightful place as the academic hub of the College that will promote and enable excellence at Queen’s for generations to come; thank you to everyone involved.

Prof P A Madden FRS FRSE
The Provost
Queen’s is one of the finest examples of a pre-20th century complete college of one era and in one style: late Renaissance, conceived and realised between 1672 and 1761. Front and Back Quads are classically aligned; the gardens to the west follow a more naturalistic approach. There are many exceptional spaces, in particular the Library, which holds both a large working collection and one of the largest, most diverse collections of rare books in Oxford. The Upper Library dates from 1692-1695 and the Lower Library was created by Cockerell in 1843.

Rick Mather Architects won the competition to design the New Library for Queen’s in 2006. With limited space on the College site, they identified the perfect location beneath the Provost’s Garden and an early decision was made to link the new space to the existing Library, both physically and visually.

The overriding design principle was to include natural light for users to enjoy, while protecting the books from it. A roof light runs from north to south, illuminating the Ioan James Reading Room and the staff offices and giving spectacular new views of the western façade of the existing library. The Historic Collection and Archive Store, with bespoke roller racking and optimum storage conditions, and the related Feinberg Reading Room are located farthest from the natural light.

The Provost’s Garden having been dismantled, with many trees and shrubs removed to return after the build, work began in February 2015. Oxford Archaeology was retained to explore the history of the site and uncovered a number of interesting objects from across the centuries, some of which will go on display in the Lower Library. Thereafter the excavation of the site and the build began in earnest. The New Library was completed in April 2017, its roof waterproofed, the lawn laid on top and beds surrounding it immediately replanted. The Provost’s Garden returned to its former glory.

The New Library now includes the Historic Collection and Archive Store and The Feinberg Room, The Waverley Room housing the Peet Library (our Egyptology collection), an already popular multi-purpose room for communal learning, and the Ioan James Reading Room, which provides a variety of individual reader spaces according to preference. The New Library houses all the reserve and half of the circulating library collections, offices for our Librarians and Archivist and three new exhibition cases. The state-of-the-art plant room provides heating, cooling and safety systems throughout the whole Library by means of a ground-source heat pump and there is access to Wi-Fi, Ethernet and power at every desk across all three floors. There are fully accessible cloakrooms and lockers for all readers, with a lift for disabled access to the New Library.
£10,392,378: overall project capital cost
£5,027,000: funds raised for the project
178: donors to the project
3000: cubic metres (consolidated): the volume of soil removed to make room for the building
750: 16 tonne trucks required to shift all the excavated soil
10: geothermal piles at a depth of 55 metres
299: concrete piles
4500: worms added to the roots of the Copper Beech tree to ensure its survival
5: kilometres of electrical wiring
200: working days taken to move:
130,000: items to the New Library from five locations
146,000: books in our collection
100,000: rare books / manuscripts

72,420: the number of entries to the Library in 2015/16
125: reader spaces in the entire Library
39: reader spaces in the Ioan James Reading Room
712: sq m: internal floor area
1800: linear metres of books in the New Library
800: linear metres of books in the Historic Collection and Archive Store
559: the number of items from the Special Collections that were consulted in 2015/16
50 x 96: mm: the size of the smallest book in the Library (Hippocratis coi aphorismorum sections octo; ex interpretation Anutii Foesii, 1633)
107: cm: the height of the largest book in the Library (Description de l’Egypte, 1809)
730-550: BC: the date of the oldest book in the library (Abnormal hieratic papyri)
"A beautifully designed, modern, light, cool and genuinely inviting space to work which complements the more formal and historic Upper Library."

"Having both traditional and modern facilities in the same library is a huge positive."
“Both the New Library and reconfigured Lower Library are great facilities, encouraging more Queen’s students to engage in their studies within College.”

“The New Library is one of my favourite workspaces across the University. The lighting, a mixture of natural lighting from the glass panels and artificial lighting, creates an atmosphere conducive to long periods of focussed work.”
“A great working environment - modern, professional, purposeful.”

“The symmetry of all reading spaces facing one of two directions is - as quirky as it sounds - very appealing.”
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Thank you for making this building possible.

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With equal thanks to those who prefer to remain anonymous.

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