

## *Three Catholic Libraries in London*

by *Melody Layton McMahon*

**ABSTRACT:** This essay provides an overview, from a North American perspective, of three Catholic scholarly libraries in Greater London. The author sketches out the history, unique qualities, collections, and services of each of these libraries. The objectives of the essay are to introduce these libraries to a new audience, to set out points of comparison of holdings, services, and cultures, and to foster new ventures of collaboration between Catholic theology libraries globally.

A recent visit to London provided me with an opportunity to become acquainted with three local scholarly Catholic theological libraries (two in London itself, and one nearby). London is divided into two Catholic dioceses (each are one of the five provinces of England and Wales)—Westminster (which includes northern London and Hertfordshire) and Southwark (which includes London south of the Thames and Kent). Trying even to grasp the possibilities to visit was quite daunting. Googling London Catholic libraries brought me to the three I did visit. A search through the *Catholic Directory of England and Wales*<sup>1</sup> has provided information about a library in the Southwark diocese, though in Canterbury, not London, that I must make plans to visit on a subsequent trip—the library of the Franciscan International Study Centre. This center offers the B.A. and M.A. in theology and Franciscan Studies, and has the largest Franciscan collection in northern Europe.<sup>2</sup>

In trying to compare three libraries of the same type, it's quite natural to assume a great deal of similarity, but in actuality these three libraries each have a very different mission and purpose. The library at Heythrop College, the library at Allen Hall, and the Catholic National Library (CNL) each demonstrate how libraries have their own personalities and must be viewed with the mission of the institution in mind. The library at Heythrop College is part of a large university consortium, the library at Allen Hall supports the pre-theology students of the Diocese of Westminster who then do their theological study at Heythrop, and the CNL is a populist lending library. However, all three constitute serious theological collections, providing services to scholars of theology. I chose to focus on these, though there are other Catholic collections in London—a review of Catholic libraries in the London area could include parish, parish school, Catholic sixth form colleges (analogous to upper-level high school for the United States), as well as a Catholic college that mostly serves students learning to be teachers—because they seemed most similar to the library I direct. In visiting these libraries, I hoped to learn about special collections that might be helpful to my students, if I or any associations or colleagues could be of help to them, and find out if there were collaborative projects that could be arranged.

### THE LIBRARY OF HEYTHROP COLLEGE

As a librarian at a graduate school of theology myself, I found the environment at Heythrop quite familiar. Heythrop College has since 1970 been part of the University of London, providing specialist studies in philosophy and theology. The library has two principal stakeholders, the College and the British Province of the Society of Jesus, and strives to provide the resources needed to meet the teaching, learning, and research needs of the College.

<sup>1</sup> *Catholic Directory of England and Wales 2008* (Cheshire, UK: Gabriel Communications Ltd., 2008).

<sup>2</sup> <http://library.franciscans.ac.uk/>.

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It also aims “to be a nationally significant resource in theology and in philosophy, the strengths of which reflect its Roman Catholic and Jesuit tradition. In pursuing this goal it takes into account, not just the needs of the College, but also the University, the British Province, the Christian community, and researchers in general.”<sup>3</sup>

The college has about one thousand students, including undergraduate and graduate students. Most of the students are laypersons, though it does undertake the theological education of the priest candidates of the Jesuits of the British Province and of the Diocese of Westminster.

### **History of Heythrop College**

Heythrop was established as a Jesuit school in Louvain in 1614. Its history is both fascinating and complex, showing the effects of the Jesuit suppressions and English recusant history as well as modern educational practices. During the persecution of Roman Catholics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, those loyal to the papacy relied on priests who were educated abroad, among them members of the Jesuits who were educated at various Jesuit schools on the continent, including the Jesuit martyrs, poet Robert Southwell and Edmund Campion. In 1612, the Jesuits were given a large sum of money from an Englishman to open a house of study for those who would become English Jesuits. In 1614, a house the Jesuits owned was opened in Louvain for the novices and those studying philosophy and theology (the next stages after the novitiate in preparation to become a Jesuit). However, by the end of the year, it had become too dangerous—there was a sizable English population in Louvain, including some who were known to be government spies. The novices were sent to Liege and eventually the other “scholastics” were sent there as well.

The school continued in Liege until the worldwide Jesuit suppression of 1773. The Jesuits tried as much as possible to carry on as if the suppression had never happened until 1794 when the French, who were at war with England, marched toward Liege. By this time, England was again relatively safe for Catholics, so the staff and students packed up and departed by barge for Rotterdam, then by boat to Hull. Some of the travellers disembarked at Harwich, but most travelled on to Hull; they then travelled to Stonyhurst where a home was waiting for them at an unoccupied residence of Thomas Weld, a former pupil. It is quite possible that at this time, boxes of books from the library (even incunabula) were left when the barge could not contain all the packed items they had brought.

The University of London was established in 1836. Not only was it allowed to grant degrees to the two original colleges (King’s and University), but also to other colleges around the country who applied and met the standards. Stonyhurst received this faculty in 1840. Another complicating factor was that in 1848 the student priests in theology who had been at St. Mary’s left for North Wales, while the philosophers remained at St Mary’s. St. Beuno’s, which later provided inspiration for the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, was as remote as Stonyhurst. In the twentieth century, forward-looking Jesuits began to realize that having philosophy and theology students split up in extremely remote locations far from other British scholarly locations was unwise. The Superior General of the Jesuits encouraged the English Province to find a new home that would bring the schools in closer proximity to an English university. The Jesuits found Heythrop Hall, close to Oxford. Oddly enough, this home had been owned in the 1700s by the Jesuit Gilbert Talbot, but had been bought and sold, destroyed by fire, and rebuilt during the intervening two hundred years.

In 1965, Heythrop became a Pontifical Atheneum, able to grant degrees. It opened its doors to lay people and other religious orders. A new library was built on the campus. However, by 1969, some faculty wanted to become more

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.heythrop.ac.uk/about-us/library-and-learning-resources/collection-management-policy.html>.

integrated into the British University system, and they were granted the right to become a part of the University of London, moving again and re-opening the college at Cavendish Square in London under the principalship of Frederick Copleston, the renowned Jesuit philosopher. However, by becoming a part of the University, Heythrop became self governing and was no longer avowedly Jesuit or Catholic, though a minority of governors were Jesuit. In 1993, for financial reasons (it was too expensive to remain in such a highly desirable central neighborhood), the school moved to its present location at Kensington Square, which had formerly been a training college of the Sisters of the Assumption. Even though it is now simply a part of the University of London, there are more Jesuits on faculty than at Louvain or Liege, and the Catholic ethos is quite strong, maintaining its continuity and history with the Jesuits.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Heythrop College Library Today**

Its collection of books in philosophy and theology comprises about 170,000-180,000 volumes. The library currently receives about 400 journals. A collection policy, by subject, is available on the library's website.<sup>5</sup> The move to Kensington Square allowed the library to be reorganized and situated in two buildings, one of which was previously a gymnasium and one a former administrative building. In the gymnasium building are the theology library and offices of the librarians. The philosophy collection is in the administrative building. Both libraries have circulation desks staffed by paraprofessionals during the week and on Saturdays. Having only one service point would be of great benefit to the library, allowing it to reduce staffing of multiple points of service. However, there is not room for both collections on one site and until a new building can be considered, the libraries will have to remain separate. The philosophy library consists of an outer room with the service desk and periodicals, and a larger room with stacks and reading areas. The philosophy collection has about 20,000 books and receives about 35 journals, demonstrating the importance of philosophy studies at the college at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The theology library occupies two floors of the three-story building. The extra floors were added to accommodate the library, though the third floor houses classrooms and academic staff offices. The librarians' offices are on the ground floor, as is the bulk of the collection. There is a small room for rare books, which includes about forty incunabula, and also houses the papers of Charles Davis and Michael Hornsby-Smith. The librarian, Christopher Pedley, S.J., would like to enlarge the collection of papers; however, there simply is not room at present for this type of collection development.<sup>6</sup> The rest of the ground floor holds most of the collection in compact shelving, which is accessible to the faculty and students. Both books and journals are stored here; unfortunately, this space is full and materials are also being stored at Egham, a warehouse for libraries who are part of the University of London. The Egham facility does provide regular delivery service. The first floor (what we in the United States would typically call the second floor) holds the service desk and a portion of the collection that is the most heavily used, along with the current periodicals area. There is a small area containing heavily used reference material, but many other reference works are intershelved with the circulating collection.

The collection is organized by Library of Congress classification, except for theology, which is still being classified by the Lynn Peterson scheme. The library catalog is an INNOPAC system and is part of COPAC, the library catalog that gives free access to the merged online catalogs of many major university, specialist, and national libraries in the United Kingdom and Ireland, including the British Library. The library has not finished a retrospective conversion project, and there are currently no plans to do so due to funding issues. Most of the post-1900 materials are in

<sup>4</sup> For a much fuller history, see the Heythrop website: <http://www.heythrop.ac.uk/about-us/college-history.html>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.heythrop.ac.uk/about-us/library-and-learning-resources/collection-management-policy.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Heythrop's archives are housed at a separate site that is part of the Jesuit archives in the city at the British Province headquarters.

the online catalog, but earlier ones have a card catalog; a separate card catalog is available for the pre-1801 items. This part of the collection is about 60,000 volumes, of which about 20,000 are pre-1801, but fortunately the incunabula and the rarest books are in the online catalog and are kept at the College. There are about 1,800 pre-1801 books in the catalog.

### **Staff and Services**

The library has six staff members. The librarian, a deputy librarian/chief cataloger, and an acquisitions librarian are all ranked as professional librarians. Three others who staff the service points are not ranked as professional librarians, though two of them are professionally qualified in library science, while the other holds degrees in theology. The library is open 9:30 to 7 Monday through Friday and 10 to 5 on Saturday. Like most academic libraries, this one has received repeated pleas to remain open more hours. Its current affiliation as one of the colleges of the University of London provides it with many benefits that it would not otherwise be able to offer to its patrons. Lending and reciprocal use among the University libraries is facilitated, which is of immense benefit to students. Other universities in London do not necessarily have this privilege, and it is one that is highly sought after by students. Further, the main University library provides databases and electronic journals for University staff and students which allow Heythrop to make available many more resources than the College could otherwise offer. In fact, currently the only online database Heythrop itself subscribes to is ATLASerials. In addition, Heythrop is a member of the SCONUL and M25 consortia. SCONUL is a consortia of over 170 libraries in the United Kingdom and Ireland. M25 is a consortia of nearly sixty institutions (including museums) in the East and Southeast of England. (While consortia in the United States often have a plethora of user types, these two consortia have a seemingly convoluted scheme that depends on type of degree, whether one is full- or part-time, whether one is a distance learner, etc. to decide who can borrow, visit, or none of the above!)

### **ALLEN HALL**

Allen Hall is the seminary of the Catholic diocese of Westminster, which includes London boroughs north of the Thames and the surrounding area. It is one of seven seminaries for priest candidates of England and Wales, four of which are in the United Kingdom, two in Rome, and one in Valladolid, Spain. Besides the Westminster students, Allen Hall educates candidates from a few other dioceses in England, a few religious order candidates, and some from other dioceses of Europe, most frequently those from Oslo.<sup>7</sup> The seminarians of the Southwark dioceses are educated at St. John's Seminary in Womersley, Guildford, which provides seminary education and formation for most of southern England. Formation consists of six years of study (after what is most analogous to our leaving high school) and the philosophy or pre-theology is done at Allen Hall and validated by the Pontifical University of Maynooth, Ireland. Following that, students do a year of parish work, then return to live at Allen Hall. Allen Hall is affiliated with both the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium (which awards an S.T.B. to students who successfully finish their theology study at Allen Hall) and with Heythrop College for the final years of theological study.

### **History of Allen Hall**

Allen Hall dates back to the foundation of a seminary in Douai, France, by Cardinal William Allen in 1568, which became dedicated to the training of missionary priests for England. Over more than one hundred years, 158 members of the college were martyred. Cardinal Allen is known for his translation of the Bible into the vernacular

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.allenhall.org.uk/home/about.html>.

known as the Douai. He was the first English cardinal after the Reformation, and interestingly for theological librarians, in 1590 he was named Prefect of the Vatican Library by Pope Gregory XIV, where he was also placed in charge of the revision of the Latin Vulgate.

In 1793 the seminary, like that of the Jesuits, was able to return to England, this time to Old Hall Green, Ware in Hertfordshire. The property in France at Douai was confiscated during the French Revolution, but penal laws had been fortunately been relaxed somewhat in England. The new school was called St. Edmunds, but when a new hall was built there for the seminarians in the early 1900s it was called Allen Hall in honor of Cardinal Allen. The seminary moved to Chelsea in 1975 to provide space for St. Edmund's to expand as a college and to allow more on-site pastoral training for the seminarians in London. The seminary relocated to the site of St. Thomas More's Great House, "uniting the tradition of the college of missionaries and martyrs with that of the pre-Reformation Church and her traditions."<sup>8</sup> This association was one of its attractions for me—the Paul Bechtold Library at CTU (of which I am director) has a collection of Moreana and to have this opportunity to visit the home of St. Thomas More, which he built in 1524, and where he lived with his family until 1534, when he was arrested for treason, was unforgettable. The Allen Hall library houses a small collection of art of St. Thomas More, notably the roundel of him and St. John Fisher, which hangs over the small reference collection in the reading room. Beginning in 1898 the house was the convent of the Sisters of Adoration Réparatrice, an enclosed congregation of nuns founded for the practice of the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. When the seminary decided to make the move to London, the sisters generously offered this wonderful home to the diocese.<sup>9</sup>

### **Allen Hall Library Today**

Since so much of the Hall's academic work is carried out through other universities, the library on site is small, housed in what was the convent chapel after the original chapel was bombed in WWII. A small notice also commemorates lectures by Chesterton and Belloc in this space. The library currently receives about forty journals; it has a small reference collection in the main reading room and a limited circulating collection. Another small portion of the library, the bound journal collection, is housed in the basement.

The Allen Hall Library has no librarian; it is staffed by upper-level students who are studying at Heythrop. It uses its own classification system (see illustration, following pages). Students at my institution would not find study there very agreeable, as rules posted allow only five books to be checked out at one time and no laptops are allowed. The library has its own online catalog, using Heritage, a small library management software which provides for cataloging, circulation, and other library functions.

### **CATHOLIC NATIONAL LIBRARY**

The third library included in this visit is quite unlike any I am aware of in the United States. The Catholic National Library is a "populist" collection, circulating and reference, housed at St Michael's Abbey in Farnborough, about thirty minutes by train from London.

### **History of the Catholic National Library**

The library was started in 1912 by William Reed-Lewis, an American from Philadelphia. A convert, he desired to make books on Catholicism available to those interested in the faith but not yet ready to speak to a priest. So,

<sup>8</sup> For more about the history of Allen Hall, see <http://www.allenhall.org.uk/history/history.html>.

<sup>9</sup> For more about the Douai Martyrs, see the Allen Hall website, <http://www.allenhall.org.uk/history/douaimartyrs.html>.

**LIBRARY CLASSIFICATION TABLE  
ALLEN HALL SEMINARY**

<b>A</b>	<b>REFERENCE WORKS</b>	<b>DF</b>	Christology and Redemption	<b>FGA</b>	Pentateuch
<b>BA</b>	<b>ART AND OVER-SIZED WORKS</b>	<b>DGA</b>	The Church in general	<b>FGB</b>	Historical Book
<b>C</b>	<b>PHILOSOPHY</b>	<b>DGB</b>	People of God an Laity	<b>FGC</b>	Wisdom
<b>CA</b>	General	<b>DGC</b>	Church Hierarchy	<b>FGD</b>	Psalms
<b>CAA</b>	General History of Philosophy	<b>DGD</b>	Church Unity	<b>FGE</b>	Prophets
<b>CBA</b>	History of Ancient Philosophy	<b>DGE</b>	Church of the East	<b>FH</b>	New Testament in general
<b>CBB</b>	Ancient Philosophy - texts and commentaries	<b>DGF</b>	The Anglican Church	<b>FIA</b>	Gospels in general
<b>CCA</b>	History of Medieval Philosophy	<b>DGG</b>	Protestantism	<b>FIB</b>	Matthew
<b>CCB</b>	Medieval Philosophy - texts and commentaries	<b>DGH</b>	Other Christan movements/sects	<b>FIC</b>	Mark
<b>CCC</b>	Medieval Philosophy - Jewish and Islamic	<b>DHA</b>	Theology of Mission	<b>FID</b>	Luke and Acts
<b>CD</b>	Descartes to early 20th century	<b>DHB</b>	Pastoral Care	<b>FIE</b>	John
<b>CE</b>	20th century Philosophy	<b>DHC</b>	Medical - Psychiatric - Homosexuality, Abortion	<b>FIG</b>	Paul
<b>CF</b>	Collected papers on Philosophy	<b>DHD</b>	Psychology	<b>FIH</b>	Hebrews
<b>CG</b>	Marxism and Communism	<b>DHE</b>	Sociology	<b>FIJ</b>	Pastoral epistles, Book of Revelation
<b>D</b>	<b>THEOLOGY</b>	<b>DHF</b>	Sexuality, Marriage	<b>FJ</b>	Christ
<b>D</b>	- conciliar documents	<b>DHG</b>	Social Justice, Politics, Economics	<b>FK</b>	Biblical Theology
	- Vatican II documents, comm	<b>DHH</b>	Liberation and Black Theology	<b>FKA</b>	Old Testament Theology
	- doctrinal documents	<b>DHI</b>	Feminist Theology	<b>FKB</b>	New Testament Theology
	- papal texts and commentaries	<b>DHJ</b>	War and Peace	<b>FLA</b>	Old Testament History
<b>DAC</b>	Works of Thomas Aquinas	<b>DHK</b>	Ecology	<b>FLB</b>	New Testament History
<b>DAD</b>	Works on Thomas Aquinas	<b>DI</b>	Mary	<b>FM</b>	Bible Culture and Geograpy
<b>DAF</b>	20th century theologians	<b>DKA</b>	Sacraments in general	<b>FN</b>	Jewish Religion; Apocrypha; Quomran
<b>DAG</b>	Works of Cardinal Newman	<b>DKB</b>	Babtism and Confirmation	<b>FO</b>	Biblical Archeology
<b>DAH</b>	Works on Cardinal Newman	<b>DKC</b>	Eucharist	<b>FP</b>	Hebrew Texts
<b>DB</b>	History of Doctrine	<b>DKD</b>	Penance, Sacrament of Sick	<b>FQ</b>	Syriac Texts
<b>DCA</b>	Religion in General	<b>DKF</b>	Orders	<b>FR</b>	Greek Texts
<b>DCB</b>	World Religions	<b>DL</b>	Theological Anthropology - creation, original sin, grace, eschatology	<b>FS</b>	Latin Texts
<b>DCC</b>	Theology	<b>DT</b>	Catechisms	<b>FT</b>	English Bibles
<b>DCD</b>	Revelation	<b>DTA</b>	Christian Schooling	<b>FU</b>	Bible Commentaries
<b>DD</b>	Faith, Science, philosophy, unbelief	<b>DTB</b>	Religious Education	<b>FW</b>	Bible Dictionaries
<b>DDA</b>	Christian Martyrs	<b>DTC</b>	Catechesis	<b>FX</b>	Bible Concordances
<b>DE</b>	God and Trinity	<b>E</b>	<b>MORAL THEOLOGY</b>		
		<b>F</b>	<b>SCRIPTURE</b>		
		<b>FE</b>	The Bible in general		
		<b>FF</b>	Old Testament in general		

**LIBRARY CLASSIFICATION TABLE  
ALLEN HALL SEMINARY**

<b>G</b>	<b>PATROLOGY</b>	<b>IOI</b>	Ireland	<b>LE</b>	Christ
<b>G</b>	Patristic Histories	<b>IOJ</b>	Italy	<b>LF</b>	Prayer
<b>GA</b>	Apostolic Fathers	<b>IOK</b>	Orthodox Countries	<b>LG</b>	Retreats, Conferences
<b>GAA</b>	Works & Studies of individual Fathers	<b>IOL</b>	Russia	<b>LH</b>	Collected Works
		<b>IOM</b>	Scotland	<b>LI</b>	Mary
<b>GB</b>	Collected Editions of the Fathers	<b>ION</b>	Spain	<b>LJ</b>	Sermons
<b>GBA</b>	Migne/Corpus Christianorum	<b>IOO</b>	Wales	<b>LK</b>	Priesthood
		<b>IP</b>	Missionary History	<b>M</b>	<b>CANON LAW</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>CHURCH HISTORY</b>				
<b>I</b>	Early Church History	<b>IQ</b>	History of Religious Orders	<b>P</b>	<b>SECULAR HISTORY</b>
		<b>IOA</b>	General	<b>PA</b>	General Ancient & European
<b>IA</b>	Early Church	<b>IOB</b>	Benedictine	<b>PAA</b>	Individual Countries
		<b>IOC</b>	Carmelites		
<b>IB</b>	Medieval Church	<b>IQD</b>	Carthusian	<b>PB</b>	English
		<b>IQE</b>	Cistercian		
<b>IC</b>	Reformation and Counter Reformation	<b>IOF</b>	Dominican	<b>PC</b>	Miscellaneous Historical Studies
		<b>IOG</b>	Franciscan		
<b>ID</b>	17th to 18th Centuries	<b>IOH</b>	Jesuit	<b>PD</b>	Philosophy of History
		<b>IOI</b>	Other Religious Orders		
<b>IE</b>	Ecumenical Councils - General	<b>IR</b>	History of Places & Institutions (under places not author)	<b>PE</b>	Local History
				<b>PF</b>	Medieval Texts
<b>IF</b>	Individual Ecumenical Councils				
		<b>J</b>	<b>LITURGY</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>19th CENTURY</b>
<b>IG</b>	The Papacy	<b>JA</b>	Liturgical Year		<b>NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS</b>
		<b>JB</b>	History of Liturgy		
<b>IH</b>	English Church History - general	<b>JC</b>	Liturgy: Theology & Theory	<b>R</b>	<b>LITERATURE</b>
		<b>JD</b>	Rubrics	<b>R</b>	Works of Literature
<b>II</b>	Anglo-Saxon & Medieval English Church	<b>JE</b>	Pontificals and Rites	<b>RA</b>	Anthologies of Literature
		<b>JF</b>	Divine Office	<b>RB</b>	History & Criticism
<b>IJ</b>	English Church - general studies 16-18th cent.	<b>JG</b>	Hymnology	<b>RC</b>	Travel
		<b>JH</b>	Liturgical Music & Dance		
<b>IK</b>	English Reformation to 1588	<b>JI</b>	Roman Missal	<b>S</b>	<b>ALLEN HALL</b>
		<b>JJ</b>	Eucharist	<b>SA</b>	Douai & St. Edmunds
<b>IL</b>	English Church 1588-1688	<b>JK</b>	Homiletics	<b>SB</b>	Chelsea
		<b>JL</b>	Holy Week	<b>SC</b>	St. Thomas Moore
<b>IM</b>	English Church 19-20th cent.	<b>JM</b>	Eastern Rites		
		<b>JN</b>	Anglican	<b>T</b>	<b>BIOGRAPHY</b>
<b>IO</b>	Regional Church History	<b>JO</b>	Architecture	<b>T</b>	Individual
<b>IOA</b>	Africa	<b>JP</b>	Replies of the Sac. Cg. Of Rites	<b>TA</b>	Collected
<b>IOB</b>	America	<b>JQ</b>	Sources, incl. H. Bradstal Soc.		
<b>IOC</b>	Asia	<b>JR</b>	Martyrology		
<b>IOD</b>	Australia	<b>JS</b>	Prayer books		
<b>IOE</b>	China	<b>JT</b>	R.C.I.A.		
<b>IOF</b>	Various European Countries				
<b>IOG</b>	France	<b>L</b>	<b>SPIRITUALITY</b>		
<b>IOH</b>	Germany	<b>LA</b>	History of Spirituality		
		<b>LB</b>	General Works		
		<b>LC</b>	Biblical		
		<b>LD</b>	Religious Life		

primarily with donations, he built a small collection on the porch of St. Mary Magdalene at Bexhill-On-Sea, allowing for informal borrowing by any interested parties. By 1916 the collection had grown larger than the porch could accommodate, so he moved it to his home, developing a catalog and mail order service to make the books more widely available. Mr. Reed-Lewis developed similar libraries at Madrid, Athens, and Bombay. He felt it would be more advantageous to have the collection available near Westminster Cathedral, the cathedral of the diocese of Westminster in London; in 1920, when he was invited to join the committee for the Catholic Truth Society (CTS), he was able to effect this move. He urged the move of CTS from Southwark to Victoria Street near the Westminster Cathedral, and both CTS and the library moved into the vicinity of the Cathedral in 1922. He was created a Knight of St. Gregory by Pope Pius XI for his work with the library. Reed-Lewis was also instrumental in helping many Belgian refugees during the war, and for this was awarded the MBE. He had become a British citizen, and he and his wife were retired in Brittany when they were removed to an internment camp when Germany invaded France in 1940. He died there in 1941.

In 1926 the library's name was changed to CTS Lending Library, and by 1930 the premises were becoming too small (the library now owned 15,000 books), so CTS and the library moved to Eccleston Square. Over the years, the library was relocated several times, and has been threatened many times with closure due to financial problems. In 1959, the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement of New York rescued the library, both financing and operating it, which led to great expansion. In 1997, the Friars could no longer support this work, and the Catholic Writers Guild took charge, moving the collection to a church hall across from Euston Station where it remained until 2003. Homeless once again, the library was offered space at St. Michael's Abbey, where there is sufficient room for the full collection. In 2007, the name was changed from Catholic Central Library to Catholic National Library.<sup>10</sup>

### **Catholic National Library Today**

According to the library staff (all volunteer), the library has a collection of between 70,000 and 80,000 books and pamphlets, in addition to 150 periodical subscriptions. Currently the library has very little funding, and most of what is available goes to support the periodicals collection, relying heavily on donations for books. There is an extensive collection of Mission Registers (which provide information about baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and deaths) from many parishes dating back as early as 1694, and the staff answers many questions of genealogists from these materials. In addition, the library houses the collection of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland, which is for reference only. The library also has a rare collection of Catholic fiction.

The library is classified by the Dewey Decimal system and is housed in two buildings on the abbey property. The library itself contains the main reading room, a small alcove with current periodicals, and the offices of the librarian and volunteers. The second room is a large storeroom where a large part of the collection is shelved, along with back runs of periodicals. The library does not currently offer access to electronic databases or resources, but does provide a searchable catalog of its entire holdings. This catalog is basically a spreadsheet of the old card catalog, but permits searches by author, title, call number, and subject heading. This effort was started in 2000 with volunteers providing all the work of inputting the entire manual catalog into the spreadsheet, and was completed in 2009. The library is developing a plan to bring the catalog up to date with a fully functional ILS and OPAC. Borrowing by mail continues to be the most common lending practice. Services are available through membership, at a fee of 40 pounds per year. This level of membership allows one to have five books checked out at a time and to use the enquiry services provided by the staff.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.catholic-library.org.uk/history.html>.



It recently had a paid head of library, but is now staffed entirely by volunteers (including the same head of library, Joan Bond, and two other professional librarians who volunteer and an accountant for the organization). A search for a new head librarian is underway at the time of this writing. The position will remain voluntary, and they hope to find a qualified Roman Catholic librarian with strong IT skills. For her extraordinary service to this endeavor, Joan Bond was awarded the Holy Cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*, the highest award for laity from the papacy. The staff monitor post and e-mail for requests for material and to answer any questions on Catholicism that are sent their way. I cannot say enough about this wonderful library and its volunteer staff—indeed I am quoted in the first issue of their new newsletter<sup>11</sup> as being “amazed” at their resources!

## CONCLUSIONS

These three libraries all serve different constituencies, yet they share a common theological focus and provide scholarly material for those studying in the field. There are, of course, other “Catholic libraries” in London. Catholic primary and secondary schools will often have libraries, and certainly the Roman Catholic colleges (Sixth Form) in London provide library services and collections for their students. There are some parish libraries, and various religious orders have collections in their houses as well.

Any historian would find it fascinating to explore how each of the three libraries outlined here have been formed by their histories, and how their peregrinations have left each in places of significance for the Catholic Church in England. In the annals of English Catholic history, the stories of the Jesuits, the Douai Martyrs, and the rise of the Catholic Truth Society are all very important. Each is carrying on in facilities with wonderful Catholic heritage: the home of St. Thomas More for Allen Hall, the site of the convent of the Sisters of the Assumption for Heythrop, and St. Michael’s Abbey (CNL) built by Empress Eugenie as a monastery and burial place for her husband and son.

With their common interest in scholarly theology, it seems that there is more opportunity for these libraries to collaborate than with other Catholic libraries in the area. There is some collaboration between Heythrop and Allen Hall, as the students at Allen Hall also study at Heythrop. But this does not appear to have been cultivated at any sustained level likely because Allen Hall does not have a functioning librarian. There is worthwhile opportunity for collaboration for these three libraries through the Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries (ABTAPL), but only Heythrop is currently a member. Heythrop, of course, collaborates with other academic libraries across England through its various academic associations. Allen Hall does have borrowing privileges for upper level at Heythrop. There are other seminary libraries in England that could collaborate, but at least one is in danger of closing soon, another is managed by a member of the teaching staff and students, and it is unclear how healthy the few others are. There is no organization in Britain parallel to the Catholic Library Association in the United States, serving the function of bringing together all types of Catholic libraries. Collaboration between the libraries is hindered because only Heythrop has a paid professional librarian, and all are suffering from financial problems due to the global recession. Until each is on a more stable financial grounding with an energetic librarian to provide leadership, it is unlikely that much work in this direction will take place. These same issues make collaboration on an international level even more difficult.

However, I hope visits such as the one reported here can lead to some sort of collaboration, and at the very least to personal ties to librarians who will extend privileges and services to my own patrons when appropriate. Personally, I would be delighted to see more collaboration on an international level—the ability to make more resources

<sup>11</sup> “Visitors From Across the Water,” *National Catholic Library Newsletter* 1.1 (June 2010). <http://www.catholic-library.org.uk/newsletter/2010-07.pdf>.

available that help us all to offer the kind of resources and services our faculty, students, and other patrons need and deserve. For example, the librarians of the Roman Catholic Denominational Group of the American Theological Library Association and the Academic Section of CLA have started a wiki of *Catholic Reference Resources*.<sup>12</sup> What if it were possible to extend this venture, collaborating with our fellow librarians in other parts of the world? Another possible collaboration would be to convene discussions on how bibliographic resources such as ATLASerials and CPLI could be enhanced to become more attractive for Catholic libraries. Of the libraries treated here, currently only Heythrop subscribes to ATLASerials and none subscribe to CPLI. As our study of theology becomes more globalized, collaboration will become more and more essential, and I encourage other librarians to visit other libraries and explore new ways to foster such collaboration.



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<sup>12</sup> “Catholic Reference Resources.” <http://cathrefbooks.wikidot.com/>.