

THE Pioneer



NUMBER 33 SUMMER 2009

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

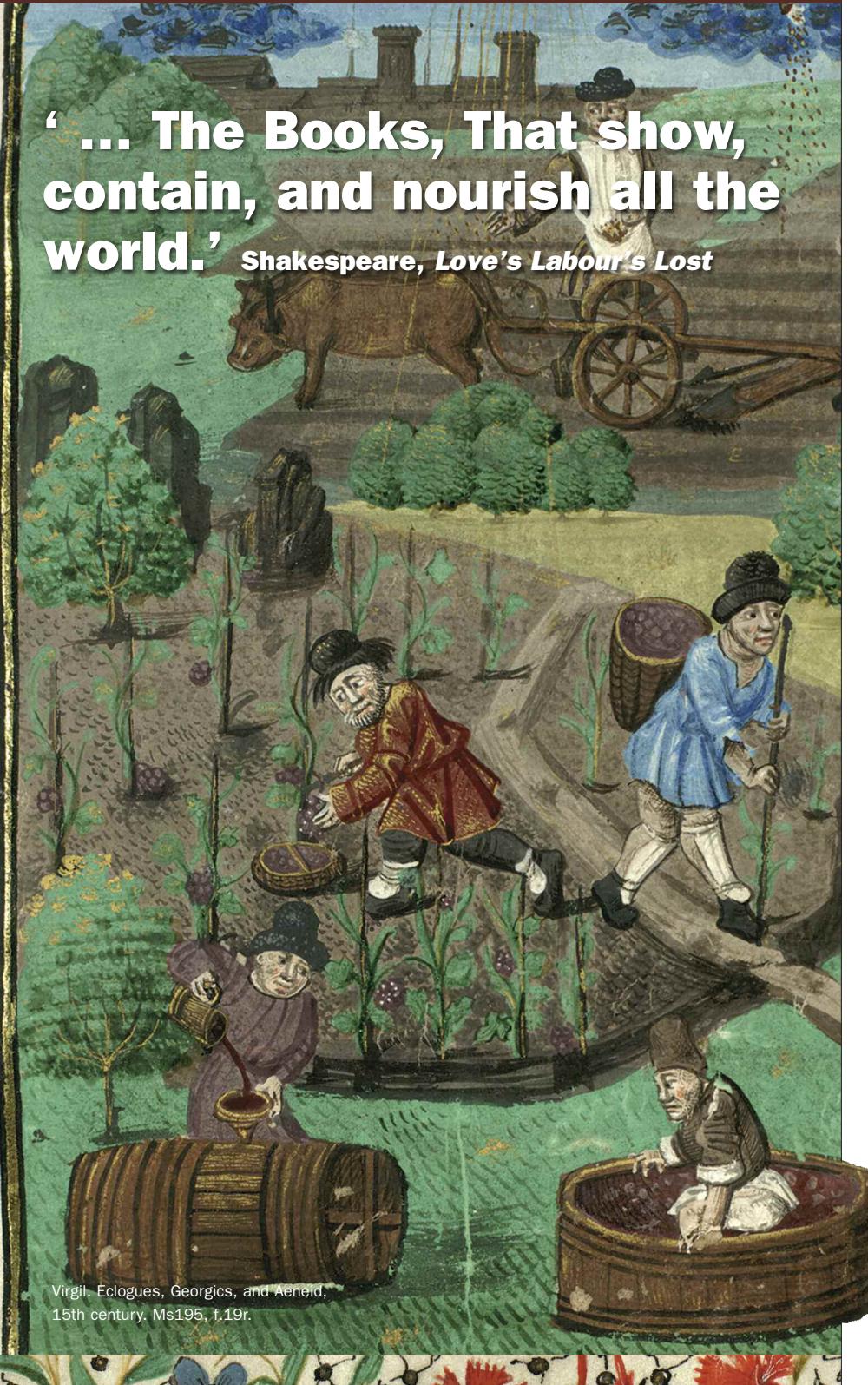
It seems a doubtful time to ask for money but rewarding causes always attract donors, and so it is that the Friends have secured a worthy future for the next phase of the Centre for Research Collections. The generous contributions of seventy-five members will provide some handsome display cases as well as curatorial creation of some fine exhibitions. These will showcase on the Ground Floor, and therefore make very accessible the wealth of Special Collections that the library has – many donated and purchased by the Friends.

We were able to match the anonymous gift of £50,000 given as a remarkable foundation donation by a Friend, and the University generously contributed £50,000. The money raised will enable the next phase of the Development to go ahead. I would like to thank all those involved in this project: staff and donors. It is an important achievement as it makes the profile of the Library unique and exciting and gives the friends a permanent and acknowledged place in its future.

'... the books, the arts, the academes, That show, contain, and nourish all the world' are our concern. I look forward with you all to experiencing some of the hidden treasures the University Library can now share with us.

Lady Caplan, President, Friends of Edinburgh University Library

'... The Books, That show, contain, and nourish all the world.' *Shakespeare, Love's Labour's Lost*



Virgil. Eclogues, Georgics, and Aeneid,
15th century. Ms195, f.19r.



Library Redevelopment

As I write, the redevelopment of the Ground Floor of the Main Library is almost complete. We already know that the Centre for Research Collections and the new study space on the 5th and 6th floors have proved immensely popular with students, academics and researchers; and we hope that the Ground Floor will be equally popular. They will be very different. The Ground Floor addresses the way in which students work today – for example, learning in groups is now important and we are providing 'group study pods' to support this way of working. They also appreciate working with a cup of coffee in hand and the café will support this. Another crucial provision is the HUB collection of books, a collection of about 60,000 High Use Books, which will help introduce students arriving at the

University to the immense collections in the Library – and encourage them to explore the larger collections in their own time. A newly developed Helpdesk will provide support to students and others in the use of the Library.

The Ground Floor will have a new glass entrance, with the exterior podium completely restructured. This will produce the same effect as originally intended of coming through a small entrance and then into the cathedral-like space of the Forum – a feature of the Sir Basil Spence building. Other original features will be retained, particularly the wooden slats and the grand staircase.

Most importantly, the Exhibition Room is being completely redeveloped. With the help of the Friends we have now purchased

exhibition cases of very high quality, addressing issues of both security and environmental control. These will be installed shortly and will be used for exhibitions of the special collections in the Library, commencing in September with an exhibition of some of our major treasures.

The finishing work of the redevelopment is still underway; but the end is now in sight. We are expecting that the Ground Floor will be handed over by the contractor in June. The café will open on 15th June, and the rest of the services on the Ground Floor will open on 1st July. We are excited by this redevelopment, and hope that you will be impressed by what we have done.

**Sheila Cannell,
Director of Library Services**





Laing Charter no 21
[3161] a grant of lands
from 1315-17



FOCUS ON ...

The Digital Imaging Unit Then and Now: 'An Inspiring Area of Work'

The history of the Photographic Department can be traced back as far as 1945 when the Library began to provide images from our collections for the use of other libraries. In those post war years of financial constraint its success relied heavily upon the ingenuity of the then Keeper of Manuscripts, Charles Finlayson, who 'was something of an expert at producing working cameras from bits and pieces of old ones bought at little cost' (*Guild and Law, Edinburgh University Library* (1982) p.124). A fully equipped department dates from 1948 when new equipment was purchased and the first photographic

technician was appointed. Growth was fast: by the late 1950s the department occupied a suite of rooms and employed three photographers. Services soon included print making, microfilming and photostatting (later photocopying). And by the time of the move to the new library building in George Square in 1967 no fewer than five photographers were employed in an impressive suite of nine rooms in the basement.

The department continued its steady work for the next three decades, although staff numbers gradually dwindled, ultimately to



Pheasants (male and female) from *Illustrations of British Ornithology* (Edinburgh: 1833) Volume II, plate 57 by Prideaux John Selby (1788–1867). This copy was purchased for EUL through the Reid Bequest

just one, and it's fair to say that it was not able to keep fully up to date with technological advances. By the late 1990s it was time for a rethink. The department at that time was still devoted to traditional film photography, although solely in 35mm, processing was restricted to black and white only and the demand for microfilming had dwindled considerably. Perhaps more importantly, the photographic landscape was undergoing a revolution as the new technology of digital photography rapidly became a serious quality contender to film

photography, and by today has, arguably, overtaken it. But whatever the arguments over quality there can be no doubt that digital photography now reigns supreme as a means of widening access to images and repurposing them for a wide variety of uses. Its versatility is unmatched.

And so, in the early years of the new millennium the decision was taken to abandon film photography and wet processing for good. The old sinks, plumbing and processing equipment, were stripped out and the rooms adapted to create a space suitable for digital photography. Thus the Digital Imaging Unit (DIU) was born. New cameras were purchased, along with the necessary studio lighting and computers, and two new photographers were recruited: Susan Pettigrew and Malcolm Brown; they currently staff the unit managed by Andrew Grout (see box).

However, the improvements did not stop there. The exciting Library redevelopment programme, which resulted in the move of the DIU to the 5th floor in 2008, enabled us to create a dedicated custom-designed studio space providing maximum flexibility and high quality work. Thanks to generous funding from the Gannochy Trust, the DIU is now firmly integrated within the synergistic research space that constitutes the Centre for Research Collections. The improvements are many: the floor of the DIU has been rendered vibration-free for our free-standing photographic equipment, the walls are painted neutral grey and the fluorescent lighting is daylight-balanced to allow for the accurate assessment of colour in the images we create. Output and quality of work has





certainly been increased as a result of the many improvements made since the relocation.

The bulk of our work involves two main strands: the creation of high-quality images from both bound and flat items, performed using a Hasselblad camera (a make famous for its use by NASA during the Apollo moon landings!), and simple black and white scanning. But we also have the capacity to scan 35mm and glass plate transparencies and to create images of less fragile flat items using a flat bed scanner. Recently, with the purchase of a dedicated table top studio and lighting kit, we have expanded our capability into the area of 3D object photography, which is proving very useful for photographing small collections of books, items from our museum collections and models used for teaching in veterinary medicine. We also undertake on-site photography around the Library, documenting this exciting period of redevelopment and providing images for the new flat panel displays on the 5th floor and in the soon to be reopened ground floor.

About half of the work undertaken by the DIU is as a direct result of readers' orders; the remaining half is generated by digital imaging projects – for which we often receive University or external funding – or by the rolling programme of digitisation of iconic items from our own collections. The latter has recently included the complete



Dr Andrew Grout (right) began his professional life as a geologist, working for the British Geological Survey for thirteen years. He then undertook postgraduate research in the history of science, which led to his appointment, in 1996, as Research Fellow in the University's Department of Geography. From 1998–2002 he worked on two flagship projects to make the cartographic heritage of Scotland more widely accessible: Project Pont and Charting the Nation. Since 2002 he has been Digital Library Officer in Special Collections and has been Digital Imaging Unit manager since 2007.

Susan Pettigrew (middle) studied photography at Stevenson College and began work at Perth Museum & Art gallery, digitising their collections of historic glass plate negatives for SCARAN. She recalls that her appointment to the Digital Imaging Unit 'came at an exciting time, as the change over to digital photography was in the early stages and provided many challenges. Even after five years, I still feel privileged to be photographing such rare and precious collections, and to be working with a team who are committed to providing a high quality service'.

Malcolm Brown (left) studied Fine Art at Glasgow School of Art, graduating with a BA (Hons) in Drawing and Painting. A subsequent career as a visual artist (exhibiting at the Talbot Rice Gallery, Collective Gallery, Glasgow Print Studio and elsewhere) was paralleled by work as a library assistant, both at Edinburgh University Library and AK Bell Public Library, Perth. As Malcolm comments: 'We are fortunate to work with top of the range technology which is capable of capturing extremely rich detail from the collections'.

imaging of some of our greatest treasures, such as Rashid al-Din's 'History of the World' (Ms Or 20), Michael Van Meer's wonderfully illustrated manuscript *Album Amicorum* (c.1620), Shelfmark, La. III. 283, and our complete collection of over 700 Hill and Adamson calotype photographic prints (1843–48). A selection of digital prints of the latter are on display until mid-June in the CRC on the 6th floor. Indeed, we aim to make our images as widely available as possible: via the Luna Insight web collections, for example (see <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/resources/collections/specdivision/images.shtml>). Many images are used in publications, some by media companies such as the BBC, and we submit images to the Bridgeman Art Library, a

commercial picture library, that results in a small but regular income stream.

Of course, our many successes do not mean that we can rest on our laurels. Technology in digital imaging moves forward at bewildering speed and the investment in equipment required to keep pace with these advancements is substantial. We still need to do more to make images available to the academic community and the general public via the worldwide web, and the necessity to catalogue accurately all the images we create is an ongoing challenge.

Digital imaging at Edinburgh University Library is an inspiring area of work and one that promises significant advances in the future. Watch this space! **Andrew Grout**

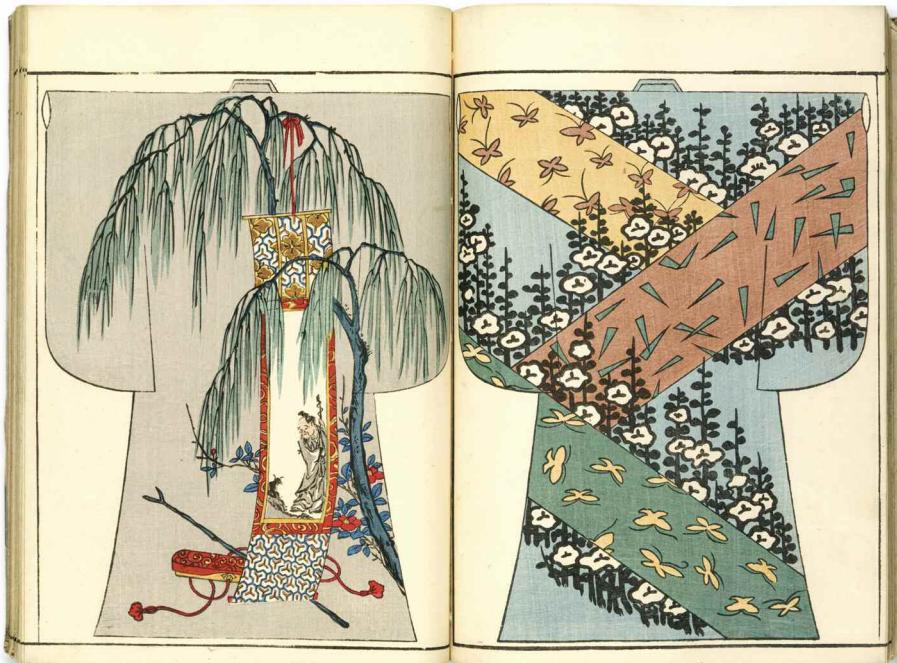


Exhibitions and Displays

The cases at the entrance to the CRC currently display a selection of Hill & Adamson calotype images and these will continue on display until mid June.

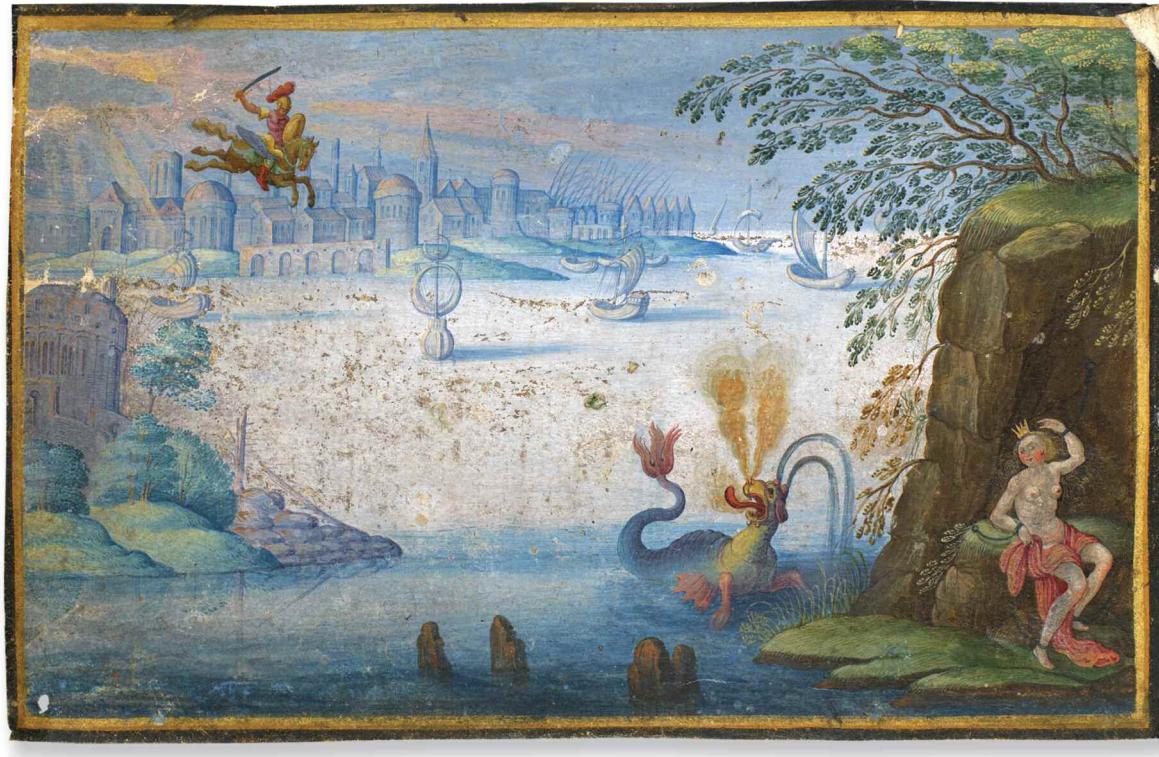
From then until the end of August a 'DIGITAL HIGHLIGHTS' display will illustrate some of the key items photographed by the Digital Imaging Unit in the past year. Two examples of these are shown here:

By September the Exhibition Room on the newly renovated Ground Floor will be available and the new exhibition cases, funded by the Friends, will be in place. These state-of-the-art cases, made by an Italian firm, are, to date, the only ones of their kind in Scotland and the first exhibition to be created in this space will be a 'Treasures' blockbuster running from September to



December – a fitting display to launch the Ground Floor space and Exhibition Room.

More news of future exhibitions in these spaces will be announced in the winter issue of *The Piper*.



Above. Japanese kimono designs (c.1900) Shelfmark RB.P. 44

Left. Michael van Meer, Album Amicorum (c.1620) LA. III. 28



Recent Acquisitions

Middle Eastern and Islamic manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library



Our collection of manuscripts from the Middle East, both Islamic and secular, is centred on the donations and bequests made in the 19th century by various scholars and officials of Empire. These brought us such gems as the famous *Jami' al-Tawarikh* of Rashid al-Din and al-Biruni's *al-Athar al-Baqiyya*, both dated early 14th century A.D. The collection, small but with some very valuable and interesting items, has had no significant additions until very recently, when four manuscripts were bought from Bernard Quaritch with the help of the Library's Strategic Fund.

These particular manuscripts were chosen primarily because of their subject matter (law, grammar, rhetoric and religious sciences), which fit well with our existing collection, and partly for the variety they display in script, appearance and age, ranging from 1423 A.D. to

1734–5 A.D. The new acquisitions are:

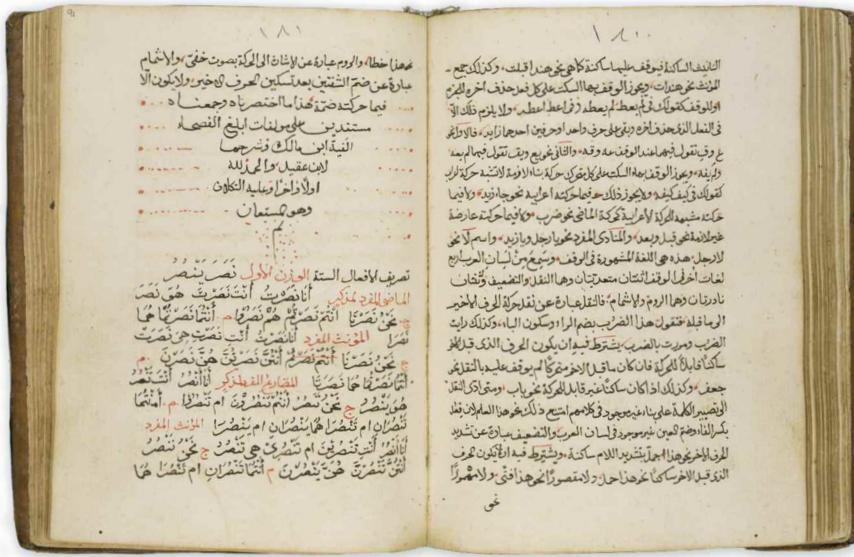
- al-Taftazani's *Sharh al-qism al-thalith min al miftah* (1423 A.D.), an early copy produced just 25 years after his death, and treating of rhetoric, logic, metaphysics and law. Copied in riq'a' script on thick cream coloured paper with some darker brown leaves

• 'Abd Allah ibn Mahmud al-Mawsili's *al-Ikhtiyar li-ta'lil al-mukhtar fi'l furu'* (late 15th century A.D.), a well-known treatise on the Islamic school of Hanafi law. Copied in naskhi script on cream coloured paper, in covers of Turkish brown morocco

• Revised version of the *Muqaddima al-ajurrumiyya* of Ibn Ajurru (1718 A.D.). This work is a treatise on the inflection of words and has been very influential in the study of Arabic grammar. Copied in black muhaqqaq script on cream coloured paper in original leather binding

• Collection of 33 treatises on religious sciences (1734–35 A.D.). Includes works on Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, Islamic dogma and linguistics. Copied on thin, polished paper in black Ottoman naskhi and nasta'liq scripts

**Frances Abercromby,
College Librarian
(Humanities & Social Science)**





Below. A 'wind-chariot' on the beach in Holland. Michael van Meer's Album Amicorum (from which this is taken) offers a fascinating view of life in the early 17th century. This is one of the earliest depictions of land wind-surfing. The chariot is flying the flag of the Prince of Orange. [La.III. 283, f.254v]



You can make a difference

By becoming a Friend you can help to support the existing collections of Edinburgh University Library and fund new acquisitions. You could even be remembered eternally by leaving a legacy to the Friends.

Don't hesitate – join now!

For a membership form, telephone 0131 650 3381
or write to:

Friends of Edinburgh University Library,
Edinburgh University Library,
George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LJ
www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/friends



Main image. Eiakintomino, a Powhatan native American, depicted in St James's Park, London, in 1615. From the Album Amicorum of Michael van Meer [La.II.283, f.254v]



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Front cover image:

Virgil. Eclogues, Georgics, and Aeneid, 15th century. Ms195, f.19r.

A secular book of a beauty to match contemporary devotional texts, this copy of Virgil was written in Paris by a Florentine scribe, Francesco Florio, and was decorated there, apparently by two different artists.

In the foreground of this miniature illustrating the Georgics a man is filling a wine cask, another treads the wine press, others are harvesting the grapes. Behind, ploughing and sowing are taking place. Ceres, half-length in cloud, scatters seed; Minerva, also half-length, crowned with olive wreath, presides over a grove of olive trees. A city is in the distance.

The Scottish royal crest, the Lion Rampant, is included in one of the illuminations. This indicates that the book was commissioned by a member of the Scottish royal family. In that case it most likely came to Scotland soon after it was made and remained here until it was given to the University Library by John Colville on his graduation in 1654. In the early days of the 'Tounis College' the Library received all its new books by way of gifts from graduating students.

Events

Unfortunately the events programme until December 2009 has not yet been finalised. A full list of events will be sent to Friends over the summer.