Exhibition and catalogue by

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Without R.A.B. Mynors’ work on and enthusiasm for Balliol’s manuscripts this exhibition would not have come about. We would like to thank the Mynors family for permission to reproduce and display R.A.B. Mynors’ work and letters, and David Rundle for giving us the scholarly perspective on Mynors’ catalogue and suggesting this subject for an exhibition in the first place.

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INTRODUCTION

Balliol's medieval library is a rare survival. While many institutions have collections of medieval manuscripts, these have often been brought together later, sometimes by antiquarian collectors, who picked them for their individual aesthetics or famous associations. In contrast, most of Balliol's medieval books have been together in the College, read and used by scholars and thinkers at Balliol since the Middle Ages.

This exhibition showcases Balliol's exceptional manuscript collection and celebrates the 20th-century study that helped to reveal it to the research community. Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors began his Catalogue of Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford when he became College Librarian in 1929. By 1940 he had a first draft, and it was virtually finished by 1960, 60 years ago. Even in June 1959, Balliol's Master at the time, David Lindsay Keir, was writing to Mynors to express his gratitude for Mynors' work and his pleasure that the Oxford University Press had agreed to publish it: 'it has been a long task but also I know a labour of love'. A letter from Oxford University Press at the very end of 1960 enquires plaintively if the manuscript that was taken away for revision will be with them again soon. It took another three years to bring it to publication in 1963. When complete it illuminated the unique characteristics of individual volumes and underlined the importance of the collection as a whole.

This exhibition looks at the scholar, the history of the collection he was working on, and his processes for creating the catalogue.

R.A.B. Mynors photographed by J.W. Thomas, Mynors dossier
R.A.B. Mynors came up to Balliol to study Classics in 1922, a decision which led to a lifelong attachment to the College. The recipient of a Domus Exhibition along with several other scholarships and prizes in Classics, the young Mynors also played an active role in College social life. He starred as Cassandra in the Balliol Players’ 1923 production of *Agamemnon*, debated with the Dervorguilla Society, and enjoyed rowing. Vacation reading parties at the Chalet des Mélèzes in the French Alps made a particular impression: ‘How that place does get under one’s skin’, he would write. The property had belonged to his friend, Francis Fortescue Urquhart (Balliol 1890–1894, Fellow 1896–1934), who bequeathed it to Mynors on his death in 1934.

Upon achieving a first-class degree in 1926 Mynors was immediately appointed a Junior Research Fellow, then a Tutorial Fellow in Classics, a position he held from 1927 until 1944. While Mynors was shy and difficult to get to know, he was famous for exhilarating lectures and well liked by his students. As an example of how he taught and entertained students from his room overlooking the front quadrangle, he encouraged a recent graduate (and friend from the Chalet), the artist Christopher Fremantle (Balliol 1925), to paint murals there in the 1930s, although he ‘never liked the pictures very much’.

Mynors spent time away from Balliol during these decades, first as a Visiting Lecturer at Harvard, and then, during the Second World War, as temporary Principal at the Treasury in London. He reluctantly took up the Kennedy Chair of Latin at Cambridge, and became a Fellow of Pembroke College there in 1944. He missed Oxford tremendously, and hoped to win the Mastership of Balliol in 1949, only
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Upon achieving a first-class degree in 1926 Mynors was immediately appointed a Junior Research Fellow, then a Junior Research Fellow in 1927. This setback, which troubled him for many years, did not prevent Mynors from maintaining a close relationship with Balliol.

By 1953, Mynors was back in Oxford as Professor of Latin at Corpus Christi College, a post he maintained until his retirement in 1970. He visited Balliol only occasionally and had a habit of 'slipping in anonymously', for example when cataloguing College glass for the British Academy’s Corpus of Medieval Stained Glass.4

When offered an Honorary Fellowship at Balliol in 1963, the same year his manuscripts catalogue was published, he accepted joyfully, remarking that, 'My heart has always been, and will be, with the College to which I owe more than I can express, and to have once more some official connection with it, however undeserved, is one of the best things that could happen to me'.

Exhibited: Letter to Master Keir upon being offered an Honorary Fellowship at Balliol, 4 June 1963, Mynors dossier

My dear Master,

Thank you very much for your letter. My heart has always been, and will be, in the College to which I owe more than I can express, and to have once more some official connection with it, however undeserved, is one of the best things that could happen to me.

Yours ever

R.Mynors.
‘ALL THIS MESSING ABOUT WITH MANUSCRIPTS’:
CLASSICS VERSUS MEDIEVAL LIBRARIES

By the time Mynors moved to Cambridge, he had been working on his catalogue of Balliol manuscripts for over a decade. He later arranged ‘to have the whole of the medieval library of Balliol sent over to Cambridge in relays’ so that he could finish. This was characteristic of a lifelong tension between studying Classics and working on reconstructing the history of medieval manuscripts and libraries, which was his passion. This is not to say that Mynors was not committed to classical scholarship: he developed a love of Virgil from his school days at Eton, and his commentary on the Georgics was published posthumously in 1990.

The influence of M.R. James (his mentor, and renowned manuscript expert) combined with the travel requirements of a Derby Scholarship in 1926 seem to have refocused his interests on Continental medievalism early on, yet all of his academic posts were in Classics. He accepted the Jowett Lectureship at Balliol in 1940, but felt constantly distracted by ‘all this messing about with manuscripts’.

Mynors is today perhaps best known for his work in medieval studies, yet his involvement in projects like Oxford Medieval Texts and the Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources stemmed from his Latin expertise. He took a long view of Latin’s place in Western culture, from antiquity to the humanist revival of the 16th century. Post-retirement, Mynors worked on the Toronto translations of Erasmus, which a former Balliol Librarian remembers fondly: ‘He would slip quietly into the library, push another of his splendid Erasmus translations into my hand, and try to slip out again.’

‘I HAVE BECOME A KEEN FORESTER’: MYNORS, TREGAOG AND FAMILY LIFE

There existed a certain harmony between Mynors’ academic and private life. He and his wife, Lavinia, a medical researcher, were perfectly matched, enjoying each other’s ‘wit, individuality and generosity of spirit’.¹² His work on the Georgics was informed by his love and knowledge of gardening and agriculture, ancient and modern. He was able to indulge this when he inherited the family seat at Trego near St Weonards, Herefordshire.¹³ He and Lavinia spent many happy days planting and tending to trees in the grounds, where they lived with his twin, Humphrey, and his wife, Marian, for the last years of their lives.¹⁴

Despite very different careers – Sir Humphrey Mynors became Deputy Governor of the Bank of England – the twins collaborated on Mynors’ medieval projects. When researching the Registrum Anglie, a complex 13th-century union library catalogue, Humphrey worked out the meaning of numbers allocated to libraries by plotting the locations of monasteries on a Bank of England map.¹⁵ The Mynors twins ‘bore a remarkable resemblance’ to each other and stories are told of ‘confusions and . . . impersonations’.¹⁶ Humphrey died a few months before Mynors in 1989.

Exhibited: Letter to Christopher Hill (Balliol Master 1965–1978), 25 January 1976, Mynors dossier

Mynors on trees in a letter to Christopher Hill: ‘... young trees don’t answer back or criticize – they just grow, and look like outliving one, and get no less beautiful with age – all the things one cannot do oneself.' Reproduced by kind permission of the Mynors family

Photograph showing the Mynors brothers visiting the Chalet in the 1920s, photograph albums of Francis Fortescue Urquhart 9, 51a
Mynors’ work on manuscript catalogues followed him throughout his life, from Oxford to the libraries of Europe, to London, to Cambridge and back, and up to the tower room in Treago that served as his office in retirement. His interest in cataloguing grew from a desire to produce reliable editions of a text – firstly the 6th-century *Institutiones* by Cassiodorus – by examining all surviving copies to ‘establish the relationship of the manuscripts to one another’.17

Mynors soon turned his attention to English medieval libraries, working with N.R. Ker, R.W. Hunt and C.R. Cheney to assemble evidence of provenance from the surviving books themselves, and from extant medieval catalogues. The first endeavour was published by Ker as *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* in 1941, while the second evolved over the decades into the multi-volume Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues.18

All the while, Mynors had been working on full catalogues of the manuscripts held at Balliol (a partial first draft emerged by 1940, but was not published until 1963), and at Durham Cathedral (1939). Mynors was on his way home from working on his catalogue of the manuscripts of Hereford Cathedral when he was killed in a road accident on 17 October 1989. As he left the Library, he had been heard to have said that he had had a good day.19

Mynors and his collaborators systematically recorded information for *Medieval Libraries* on printed cards, an approach Mynors also took when describing manuscripts for his catalogues. These, with their focus on physical features such as rulings and prickings on parchment (flesh side or hair side), gatherings, and ink, alongside script and abbreviations, colophons and marginalia, typify Mynors’ conviction of the importance of form in understanding a book’s provenance and use.

Exhibited: Pre-printed notepaper for cataloguing a manuscript, Mynors Papers
WHAT ARE MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS?

Throughout the millennium from the fall of the Western Roman Empire to the invention of printing there seems to have been remarkable uniformity in book production in Europe. Whereas previously texts had been recorded on a variety of media (wax tablets, stone, papyri, scrolls), in medieval Europe the handwritten codex (book with pages) made up from leaves of vellum or parchment (scraped and treated animal skin) became the chief medium.

Those created for a prestige library or for a wealthy patron often bore decoration known as ‘illumination’, incorporating colouring and gilding which required the skills of several different artists and scribes. Illumination functioned in many different ways: to help the reader to navigate the book; to illustrate meanings in the text; to entertain the reader; to carry markers of ownership; to demonstrate the wealth and taste of a patron. Not all medieval books were ornamented this way but those that were are so striking that they have come to be seen as representative.

However, this seeming similarity disguises significant changes in the way books were produced and consumed between the beginning of the period and the end. The two books discussed below bookend the College’s medieval manuscript collections in time, one from the 11th century, and the other from the 15th century.

RAVAGES OF TIME

Although somewhat battered and faded, one little book (MS 367) might be forgiven for its appearance as it is, at around a thousand years old, one of the oldest items held by the Library, pre-dating the College by a couple of centuries. Its 23 leaves are all that remains of a longer Antidotarium, a book of recipes for medicines. We can tell this by the fact that it starts and finishes halfway through sentences, and Mynors meticulously notes these points, reproducing the truncated phrases.

His description of the book also contains details of its age, size, number of leaves, page layout, and decoration. Where there are illustrations these are noted, such as the one shown here of a physician applying a salve to an ulcer with a brush, and their location recorded using a leaf number sometimes followed by a ‘v’, to indicate that it is on the ‘verso’, or reverse. He speculates that Italy is the country of production, and Italy was the chief source of Antidotarium manuscripts, with a focus on the medical school at Salerno. This institution sat at the centre of a network of learning, much of it Arabic, from across the Mediterranean world. It is probable that, like most manuscripts at this early period, this book would have been produced within a monastery for the use of monks and academics, and kept within its library.

The catalogue also documents the evidence for the journey of the book after its composition, recording extra remedies added centuries later, business records in the margin, and a handwritten note that suggests it was a late addition to Balliol’s collection, given by a Fellow of the College, John Conroy, at the end of the 19th century. Mynors also notes that the binding (pictured on page 8) is a modern replacement, although ‘modern’ here is a relative term – it might be 18th-century, an attractive calf-skin with extensive gilt decoration using a fleur-de-lys motif.

Exhibited: Antidotarium, Italy?, 11th century, MS 367
18th-century binding on an 11th-century Antidotarium

Interlaced initial from MS 367 folio 16
INSULT TO INJURY

While to the casual eye MS 384 might seem to be a beautiful example of medieval art, to a scholar like Mynors, ‘the pictures are poor, and their borders execrable’. Part of the reason for this harsh judgement is the fact that by the time this manuscript was produced, 400 years after the Antidotarium, book numbers had increased exponentially and it had far more competition. On one estimate the Antidotarium was one of 200,000 manuscripts produced in Western Europe in the 11th century, whereas this was one of 5,000,000 produced in the 15th century. This sort of prayer book was emblematic of that growth.

Books of hours are by far the most common genre of medieval manuscripts, and they appear only from the 13th century onwards. In essence they are a set of prayers with a calendar detailing when each should be used. In earlier centuries liturgy had been the preserve of the religious orders, but in the later Middle Ages lay people were keen to demonstrate their status and piety by following the liturgy privately. Books of hours, abbreviated from the fuller breviaries used by monks and nuns, helped them do this.

Although initially books of hours were the preserve of royalty and nobility, who indeed had the resources to commission sumptuous works of art, the market expanded down the social hierarchy, with female ownership being particularly prominent. Many were undecorated, but there was also demand for cheaper illuminated products, such as this one, that aped the more valuable with mixed success. Not only had the readership of manuscripts moved beyond the walls of the monastery, but so also had their manufacture, which was now increasingly focused on commercial scriptoria (workshops). These did make items on commission but there was demand enough for them to carry a stock of off-the-peg manuscripts that could be easily personalised for a less wealthy customer.

In spite of his rather damning evaluation in his catalogue entry, Mynors still spends time describing the book fully, listing the illustrations and, particularly, examining the calendar which is, as is often the case, annotated with the dates of births and deaths (mainly deaths in this case) of the owner’s family, revealing valuable social history, rather like family bibles in more recent centuries. He also records a note affixed by an 18th-century owner recording that the book spent a couple of centuries hidden in the thatch of an old house, possibly evidence of a 16th-century Catholic owner trying to protect it in anticipation of a reversal of fortunes during the Reformation.

Exhibited: Book of Hours (Sarum), 15th century, MS 384
IMAGINING ILLUMINATION

The opening to this manuscript comes as something of a shock. Where we might expect either an empty border or vibrant tendrils of colour and gilding, what we find is a skeletal outline of something that started off but never came to fruition. We can only imagine how the seven-headed dragon that forms the bottom border might have been coloured, and what the initial seated in the square space left for it at the top might have contained. This page, however, allows a glimpse into the processes by which manuscripts were made.

Very few medieval manuscripts were produced by a single person. Occasionally an anchorite would hole up in a cell for years and produce a book as an act of religious devotion, but on the whole the range of skills involved required the work of several different craftspeople. Producing the vellum to be written on was an art in itself, requiring periods of washing animal (usually goat, sheep or calf) skins, soaking them in lime to get rid of the hair, then careful stretching, scraping and trimming. At the scriptorium someone would co-ordinate the design and layout of the text. The page was readied for inscription by ruling out a grid of lines, whose uniformity was often ensured by pressing pins through a sheaf of leaves, leaving a network of tiny holes that could be joined up. Any illustrations might be sketched out lightly. Then one or more scribes would write the bulk of the text, avoiding any areas that were marked for decoration. Finally various artists would be employed on filling in initials, borders and larger illustrations. This manuscript seems to have reached the stage of having its smaller initials rubricated (filled in red and blue ink, with some line patterning) but not reached the artist who would have undertaken the work in polychrome dyes and gilding on the major pieces of decoration.

The only thing that is really known about the author of the text, Alexander Carpenter, is that he worked in Oxford, and a note (possibly by the 17th-century antiquarian Anthony Wood) on the flyleaf of this manuscript indicates that he may have been a Fellow of Balliol. The book itself is a contemporary text on the nature of virtue and sin which also discusses witchcraft. It betrays some sympathy for the dissident Lollards or Wycliffites, whose founder, John Wycliffe, had been Master of Balliol in the 14th century.

Exhibited: Alexander Carpenter, Destructorium Vitiorum, 15th century, MS 81
When Balliol was founded as a house for poor scholars around 1263 by John de Balliol and Lady Dervorguilla of Galloway, his wife, we do not know if any thought was given to planning a library. None was mentioned in Dervorguilla’s Statutes of 1282, but scholars had been accruing books for several years. Peter de Cossington left Balliol Boethius’ *De Musica*, when he died in 1276, and most other early acquisitions were similarly received as gifts or bequests. We know this from Mynors’ distillation of existing research on medieval wills, and his examination of the books themselves: no contemporary registers or other Library documents have survived.

Exhibited: Boethius, *De Musica*, mid-12th century, MS 317 folio 53v
Books were appropriate gifts for the fledgling educational establishment, both for the knowledge they imparted and for their monetary value. Fellows could pawn books when they needed money, and the volumes bear records of these negotiations. MS 114, a 14th-century copy of Averroes belonged to Laurence de Thornhill, who pledged it as caution for loans while a Fellow at Balliol in the 1320s. He then bequeathed it to the College. There is a late-14th-century Balliol inventory mark in the top right, and at the bottom next to the image of Reynard the Fox is a note that the book was used by Thomas Chace, the Master responsible for erecting Balliol’s first Library building in the 15th century.

By at least the 1340s, the Library was owned in common by the Fellows, who could borrow the books on long-term loan. Without a library room, the books were stored in chests. By the late 14th century, when there were around 155 volumes, a room was set aside for storing books securely using chains.

Detail from MS 114 folio 2r showing Reynard the Fox and a note that the book was used by Thomas Chace

An inscription in a 13th-century medical compilation given by William Rede, Bishop of Chichester in 1385, dictates that the volume was to be chained in the Common Library of Balliol Hall, for the common use of Fellows and students, MS 285 folio 1v
DONATIONS, FUNDRAISING AND STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES: BALLIOL LIBRARY IN THE 15TH CENTURY

By the 15th century donations had increased to the point where the Library was outgrowing its existing storage. The first Library building, with chambers underneath, was erected between the Hall and the Chapel, on the north side of the College’s quadrangle. The bays nearest the Hall were credited to Thomas Chace by a legend in a window dated 1431, but the west end of the Library was probably nearly finished by 1423, when one-time Fellow Roger Whelpdale left six books and money for a set of Library keys.

Thomas Chace considered himself the founder of Balliol’s Library. As Master he even pawned books to raise funds for its construction, as suggested by pledging inscriptions from 1413 and 1416 in a copy of the works of Isidore of Seville, MS 283. He was also Chancellor of Oxford University, being instrumental in planning Duke Humphrey’s Library, and the remaining section of Chace’s window in Balliol’s Library bears the earliest representation of the University arms.

The Library was extended by Robert Abdy (Master c1475–83), to accommodate the collection of books of William Gray, who died in 1478. Nearly two hundred volumes of his remain. R.W. Hunt, one of Mynors’ collaborators, declared that Gray’s is ‘by far the finest, as well as the largest, private collection to survive in England from the Middle Ages’.29

Chace’s pledging inscriptions in MS 283

Oxford University arms in stained glass in Balliol’s Old Library.
Photograph by Nick Cistone
Gray, a member of a distinguished family, came up to Balliol in c1431, as the first Library building neared completion. He was later Chancellor of the University and had an impressive diplomatic and clerical career, becoming Bishop of Ely in 1454. He collected manuscripts, and had texts copied throughout his life, most of which he left to Balliol, perhaps encouraged by the recent Library building.

The books were stored on their sides on the double-sided sloping lectern desks projecting from the walls between the windows, or on shelves underneath, chained to a bar. The marks of the staples which attached the chains are still visible on some volumes. The College replaced the lectern desks with bookcases in the 17th century, but a print of 1816 still conveys the essential character of the Old Library as begun by Chace and completed by Abdy.

MS 12, a copy of *Josephus*, is the only printed book that Gray donated and the only one to retain its contemporary binding. It once bore decorative bosses and a label protected by a transparent layer of horn. The pin holes for the label’s mounting may still be seen amongst the stamped stags, but the foliate border is a later repair obscuring the mark of the chain staple.

*Exhibited: Works of Josephus*, printed on vellum at Lübeck before 1475, MS 12
Mynors believed it imperative to study texts in situ. Michael Winterbottom, a former research student, dubbed the Bodleian Mynors’ ‘spiritual home’, but the description could apply to countless libraries with fascinating manuscript collections. Multiple memoirs and obituaries remark on Mynors’ habit of disappearing in libraries. Even at Cambridge he was ‘tempted’ by the University and college libraries, ostensibly for purposes of comparison with Balliol manuscripts. Mynors’ library book slip is typical of the ones he would use. He must have acquired it on a visit to a French library, possibly the Bibliothèque nationale, home to a copy of William of Nottingham’s *Questions on the Gospels*, for the reverse bears notes on different versions of that text, all incorporated into his catalogue entry for Balliol MS 75.

Exhibited: Library book slip belonging to Mynors, Mynors Papers

Mynors’ work in libraries was not merely academic, or a means to solving the mysteries of fragmented medieval libraries. Mynors also worked on libraries: he ‘reduced large bodies of material to order’. He was curator of the Bodleian whilst a Professor at Corpus Christi, but decades earlier, while a Tutorial Fellow, he also became Balliol’s College Librarian, and set to work on the manuscripts. Products of this work include invaluable concordances reconstructing previous systems of shelf-marks, such as this one relating the work of Thomas James in the 17th century to that of Henry Octavius Coxe, whose catalogue appeared in 1852.

Exhibited: Concordance of manuscript shelf-marks, Mynors Papers

Mynors left evidence of his work in the form of annotations at the end of Balliol manuscripts, indicating the number of folios and the dates he had examined them. But he also shaped the collections themselves, gathering items for the College Archives. His annotation on the back of this menu for a dinner of the Gordouli Boat Club, ‘Found on the grass of the Front Quad in the small hours of next morning’, shows an understanding of the importance of provenance and context in archival collections.

Exhibited: Library book slip belonging to Mynors. Reproduced by kind permission of the Mynors family
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Menu for the 1938 dinner of the Gordouli Boat Club, annotated by Mynors when he found it and added it to Balliol's archives, MISC 22/1

Mynors' concordance of numbers given to manuscripts by previous cataloguers. Reproduced by kind permission of the Mynors family
INTERROGATING THE MANUSCRIPTS I

Inspired by the books held captive in chains at Hereford Cathedral, Mynors imagined the cataloguer as an interrogator, the manuscripts his victims. The form of his questioning was kind, a careful turning of the pages. His scrutiny was profound: delving beneath his description of the manuscripts’ appearance to uncover the minutiae of his victims’ past; piecing together their origins, movements, interactions, transactions and absences. In book terms, nailing their provenance.

RECONSTRUCTING READING HABITS

Individual books often contain traces of the company they’ve kept, whether the names and marginal notes of former owners, or library markings such as shelf-marks. These traces can be pieced together to tentatively reconstruct collections, and thereby past reading habits. In this rare example, the library of one medieval member of Balliol, Alexander Bell, does not need to be painstakingly reconstituted because Bell wrote a list of all his books in the front of one of them. This gives an insight into the kind of books that medieval Fellows bought for their own use. Five of the books are noted as on loan to other people, e.g. ‘M. Morton habet’ – Mr Morton has it. Elsewhere there are inscriptions showing the book having been pawned at various times by previous owners, and one recording Bell’s gift of the book to Balliol.

Mynors finds Bell’s library ‘dull’ by which he meant typical of a medieval scholastic’s reading, only engaging with the emerging humanist studies at a very basic level. However, when it was written this manuscript recorded a commentary on Aristotle that had only recently been given by the philosopher and theologian Duns Scotus (Duns the Scot), resident in Oxford.

Exhibited: Duns Scotus, 14th century, MS 234

ILLUMINATING NETWORKS

Medieval books were prestige objects, valuable enough to be pawned, gifted and passed down as heirlooms. Mynors’ interrogation illuminates the networks represented by these transactions. A large part of the introduction to his catalogue is dedicated to William Gray (Balliol 1431), who gave the College more than half of its surviving medieval library, including MS 56, a commentary by a 14th-century Franciscan.

Mynors tackles how Gray acquired his books and also why: Gray ‘seems to have formed as a young man, the idea of a scholar’s library, suitable for a learned institution devoted to philosophy and theology, and provided with well-set-up copies of the best authors of all periods, common or scarce’. In other words, the collection was always destined as a magnificent gift to his College, where it might have been used for teaching, as depicted in the illumination in MS 56 showing the author lecturing to a group of friars.
Throughout his career, Gray had many agents, in England and abroad, buying and commissioning books for his library. Mynors suggests that one of these was John Warkworth, who may have acquired books for Gray on the Cambridge book market. Warkworth would have been well placed to do this as Master of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, a position conferred on him by Gray in his capacity as Bishop of Ely.37

Exhibited: Quaestiones in Sententias, Franciscus de Perusio, 14th century, MS 56
LEONARDI ARETINI AEPISTOLARVM.

EXPLICIT LIBER. SEPTIMUM IN

CIPIT FOELICITER OCTAVUS.

LEONARDO FLAVIO TO

ROLIUVIENSIV. Volo ut exta

opus aliquod studiorum meorum quod sit

tetris & index amoris mei erga sanctissimum

dominum - EVGENIUM PAPAM IIII.

Nam quom ab adolescentia mea

tullum dilexereum propter cellam

quandam cuius magnitudinem annuunt urtitus praestantia

& ipsius intestinissimus me recupere dognatius sit: debo

profecto nunc monumentum aliquod extare dilectissimi

mei - IEsu librorum. Postitumque multis & me vigilavi: mul-
taq. affidicavit & opera in latinum conversa ad besi-
tudinum suam muttere constitui. - 1. opus magnifici

ac plane regum & profecto dignissimum, quod summo

principi dedicavit, quando tuta cuius librie materia et-
defrectione popolare. Tis in fuptr eoi nitere: eas elegi-
ta scriptum: si modo illam nos feruare potuimus: ut fe-

le quasi praeclara cest, ornate audiantur. qua non erubeb-
tec: ante fami eruditi principi comparere. Tis admir-

mare autem nullum esse opus latinae linguiae de litteratis

lege) quod hue Aristotelis operis sit anteposendum digni

...
Whilst Alexander Bell and William Gray collected mainly scholastic works, MS 310 is an early copy of the letters of humanist historian Leonardo Bruni and is written in a Roman hand. It was given to the College by Richard Bole, Fellow of Balliol from 1429, whose surviving books proclaim his interest in humanism. He accompanied Gray on a two-year study trip to Cologne in 1442 and after separate careers they came together again when Gray employed him as Archdeacon of Ely. Unlike Gray, Bole copied out some of the texts in his library in his own, humanist book hand. He also copied at least one text for Gray and annotated another.

Bole remained at Ely until his death in September 1477, when he was buried in the nearby church of Wilburton. Mynors asked friends in the area to obtain a brass rubbing of Boles’ funerary monument, showing his interest in the personal stories of those who read these books hundreds of years ago.18

Exhibited: Letters of Leonardo Bruni, 1449, MS 310
Despite his quiet, self-effacing demeanour, Mynors cultivated effective networks of scholarship and friendship. His projects typically came about through connections: the catalogue of the Durham Cathedral manuscripts was prompted by his old headmaster at Eton (and future father-in-law), C.A. Alington, and inspired by his mentor, M.R. James.39 Similarly, many of his collaborators on Medieval Libraries of Great Britain and the Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues were old Etonians, but his networks spanned the country, and indeed the globe.40

Mynors relied on these networks to add detail to his catalogues, acknowledging his debts throughout the text. Notes in the entry for this 12th-century manuscript of Augustine acknowledge Ker’s tip that the 15th-century English scribe who added numbers and marginal notes also worked on a copy of Augustine’s City of God in the Bodleian Library.

Mynors also made discoveries for others’ research whilst looking at manuscripts. His correspondence with A.B. Emden of St Edmund Hall, Oxford, demonstrates this reciprocity. In 1947 they pick each other’s brains about pledging manuscripts, a key feature of both Emden’s Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500 and Mynors’ Balliol catalogue. Emden has crossed out a recommendation about a Balliol manuscript in Belgium because ‘Neil Ker tells me you know all about this’.41

It is tempting to wonder if Mynors drew parallels between his circle’s reciprocal research and the medieval patronage and book-collecting networks he spent his life reconstructing.
My dear Mynors,

I should have written before to thank you for the card which you sent me giving me the names of two new pledgers of MS Royal 1082, but I have waited until I returned to Oxford so that I could look up my notes on the other pledgers of that manuscript. Unfortunately there are several names, including the new ones of Thomas Grey and John Denton, about whom I have no other information, and it is therefore not possible at present to prove that the pledgers were all members of Balliol. William Wellisthorp was Rector of Abbotsley on the Presentation by Balliol, but Matthew, probably his brother, was a Fellow of Queen's in 1379, and as late as 1395. Matthew may, of course, have previously been a member of Balliol, and moved on to Queen's on incepting as a Master.

I like your ingenious notion of trying to get at the academic grade of the pledgers by reference to the extra loan of 2 marks 40 pence. The regulations for the Warwick Chest laid down that no Master could borrow more than one mark, and no Bachelor more than eight shillings, and no squire more than five; but I think it is open to question in the case of this manuscript whether the loan may not have been "pro utilitate domus." The regulations with regard to this Chest do not lay down the rates applicable when a College wished to raise a loan, as was certainly sometimes done. It may be that the amount which the College could raise depended upon the number of pledgers (who might be of varying academic status), that presented themselves to the Keepers of the Chest when the loan was negotiated.

I have recently come across a Balliol item, which I hope may be new to your manuscript. At 1577 in the Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique: Baldwin of Lambeth has drawn up the deed of an inscription that it was given to Balliol by William Grey, Bishop of Ely. Need I remind you how valuable these little items may be...

Yours ever,

A. B. Emden
INTERROGATING THE MANUSCRIPTS II

TRACING WRITING

Mynors was interested in the manuscripts’ creation. For him, ‘the scribes were not anonymous symbols at the foot of the page, but human beings and friends, who could be dated and placed and sometimes identified’.42

In his notes, Mynors traces the career of one Dutch scribe, Theodorus Nicolai Werken of Appenbroeck, by identifying and dating his handiwork. He records the shelf-mark of Werken’s manuscripts at Balliol and elsewhere (from Manchester to Brussels), their contents, whether they are signed, and a date, firm or guessed at. Sometimes he also notes the style of the script: ‘English hand’; ‘Humanist hand’, the colleague who identified the manuscript for him: ‘Miss Rathbone’, ‘Mrs Josephine W. Bennett’; and, in one case, he makes a note about the decoration – building a bigger picture out of small clues.

Exhibited: Mynors’ research notes for his Balliol manuscripts catalogue, Mynors Papers

Mynors’ notes about the scribe, Theodorus Werken. Reproduced by kind permission of the Mynors family
Mynors ‘saw manuscripts as part of the cultural history of Europe, and had an alert eye for connections that had been missed’. The stories of manuscript production that Mynors was tracing speak to the internationalism of medieval Europe with its cross-border routes of trade and manufacture and intellectual networks. Manuscript 238 is five volumes of the great six-volume encyclopaedia by Italian humanist Domenico Bandini. Balliol’s copy was commissioned by William Gray, an Englishman, written by Dutch scribes in Germany and Italy, and the varying styles of script and decoration throughout show a range of other influences.

One of the scribes was the Theodorus Werken whom Mynors traces in his notes. Werken’s life is also demonstrative of the movement of people across the continent. Mynors tracks Werken from his birthplace in South Holland to Cologne. It was there he met William Gray, who commissioned work from him including copying Bandini’s encyclopaedia. Over the course of several years, Werken made three of the five volumes. Volumes C and E were written by another, more elusive scribe, Laurentius Dyamas. It seems that Werken joined Gray’s household and followed him to Florence, Padua and Rome. Mynors excitedly identifies ‘the very point at which the writer broke off to cross the Alps’ – after folio 79 in volume B. He notes the changes in the ink colour, the script style, the number of leaves in a quire and the placing of catchwords as marking a transition from German to Italian bookmaking practices.

Werken went on to work for Gray’s travel companion, Richard Bole, moving back to England with him. Four of Bole’s surviving manuscripts at Balliol are written by Werken. These include MS 34, a commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon by Thomas Ringstead, in which David Rundle has identified Bole and Werken sharing the work of copying – one connection that Mynors missed.

Exhibited: Fons Memorabilium Universi, parts 2 & 3, Domenico Bandini of Arezzo, 1445, MS 238B.
26

Two copies from the same exemplar of Seneca’s Apocolocyntosis in MS 130 and MS 136.

Vincent细致地指出，小加尔文派和马洛尼派是不同的教派。他强调，这些教派之间的分界线并不是完全清晰的，而是随着时间的推移而变化的。他认为，小加尔文派和马洛尼派在信仰和实践上存在着一定的差异，但这些差异并不足以将它们划分为两个完全独立的教派。他指出，小加尔文派和马洛尼派在信仰和实践上的差异主要体现在以下几个方面：

1. 小加尔文派强调信仰的自由和个性，而马洛尼派则更注重教义的权威和教义的统一。
2. 小加尔文派更强调信仰的实践和社区的建立，而马洛尼派则更注重信仰的理论和教义的解释。
3. 小加尔文派更强调信仰的自由和个性，而马洛尼派则更注重教义的权威和教义的统一。

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TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION, TEXTUAL TRANSMUTATION

Tracing a work back towards its author through proliferated versions is key to Mynors’ study of early texts, classical and medieval. He marvels that Gray managed to find a copy of *Fons Memorabilium Universi* for his scribe to use as an exemplar: ‘Bandino’s great encyclopaedia is rare even in Italy and was hardly to be expected in Cologne’, but in this case probes the mystery no further as his ‘concern is with the scribe’.46

His correspondence with P.T. Eden about three manuscripts containing the same texts by Roman philosopher Seneca exemplifies his interest in textual transmission. Mynors references Eden’s 1960 article on the subject in his catalogue, pointing outwards to more in-depth research.

Minutely comparing two manuscripts commissioned by Gray and one at the Bodleian, Eden isolates scribal errors and corrections, textual departures and resemblances. He establishes that Gray’s manuscripts had the same parent but were copied by different scribes in different places: MS 130 made on vellum in Cologne and MS 136 made on paper in Italy. MS Bodley 292 is a child of 130, Gray’s manuscript being used as an exemplar once it was back in England.47

Eden tells Mynors that all three are ‘valueless from a textual point of view’.48 They give no new insights into the original text, as their great-grandparent takes the textual tradition back to the 11th century and the extant copy thought to be nearest the original text is even older. But tracing the lineage of manuscripts also reveals the social and intellectual networks which produced and used them. Many of the connections are unsurprising but occasionally one will provide new insight, or raise questions: What was the exemplar for Gray’s copy of Bandini and how did it reach Cologne? If Gray’s first Seneca was written in Cologne why did he need the original exemplar in Italy and why did he have another copy made there?

Exhibited: Seneca, 1442-4, MS 130; Letter from P.T. Eden to Mynors, 3 June 1958, Mynors Papers

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that he could not locate. No one knows whether they are lying forgotten in old lofts or long dismantled for use in the bindings of early printed books. Another appendix lists Balliol manuscripts that strayed to other collections from Cambridge to Antwerp. Five of these only went as far as the Bodleian, ostensibly taken into care by Thomas James, Bodley’s first Librarian. His nephew Richard, cheekily begging another Balliol book (MS 296) from Henry Jackson for the collection of Robert Cotton, wrote, it ‘is already lost to Bailioll College, whither if it returne, it must perish assuredly, wherefore my Uncle borrowed somme of their MS and gave them to the Universitie librarie’. Latterly curatorial practice has improved and little has been lost since the 17th century, though much has been added.

Exhibited: John Climacus and other religious texts, MS78B, with decoration cut away
A 6th-century monk’s instruction on how to reach God by cultivating ascetic virtues begins MS 78B’s compilation of Christian texts. A later reader of this opulent manuscript had more worldly concerns when they cut away the bottom of the opening page. The missing portion of the decoration probably incorporated William Gray’s coat of arms. The vandal may have wanted to conceal Gray’s ownership by removing the arms but it seems more likely that they were taken by an antiquarian autograph collector. Many of Balliol’s manuscripts bear the marks of similar defacement. Mynors describes the gaps but rarely speculates on their significance.

He also tracks down whole manuscripts listed in early catalogues that have since wandered from Balliol’s Library. One of the appendices to his catalogue records manuscripts that he could not locate. No one knows whether they are lying forgotten in old lofts or long dismantled for use in the bindings of early printed books. Another appendix lists Balliol manuscripts that strayed to other collections from Cambridge to Antwerp. Five of these only went as far as the Bodleian, ostensibly taken into care by Thomas James, Bodley’s first Librarian. His nephew Richard, cheekily begging another Balliol book (MS 296) from Henry Jackson for the collection of Robert Cotton, wrote, it ’is already lost to Balliol College, whither if it returne, it must perish assuredly, wherefore my Uncle borrowed some of their MS and gave them to the Universitie librarie’. Latterly curatorial practice has improved and little has been lost since the 17th century, though much has been added.

Exhibited: John Climacus and other religious texts, 1448, MS 78B
From within a long-established culture of print, it might seem that the development of printing at the end of the Middle Ages represented a revolutionary shift in book production and consumption. There are, however, many indicators that the matter was not so clear cut to contemporary writers and readers.

Firstly manuscript books continued to be produced and consumed after the advent of printing. Secondly the first printed volumes themselves often demonstrated in their design the generally conservative nature of reading culture until well into the 16th century. Incunabula, or 15th-century printed books, were commonly laid out to incorporate the same hand-applied illumination that provided navigation and decoration in manuscript volumes. Consequently these early printings are superficially very similar to manuscripts. This is demonstrated in the example shown here, an edition of the Bible with the medieval commentary of Nicholas of Lyra, printed in Venice in the 1480s. Even after the rather arbitrary boundary of 1500 some printed books, particularly prayer books and Bibles, continued to be produced on vellum rather than paper, with hand-colouring and gilding applied to initials and illustrations.

It wasn’t just book producers who didn’t always distinguish between the two technologies. Readers of the time were much less concerned about it than their successors. William Gray left a single printed book to the Library (pictured on page 15) but it was treated in exactly the same way as all his manuscript donations and remains among the College’s manuscript collections to this day. This lack of concern may also be why Balliol has retained so much of its medieval manuscript library. As a rather impeccuous, and conspicuously Catholic, foundation it could not really afford to update its large library with newer printed versions of texts and so the manuscript volumes were left alone, at least until the changes forced on it by the Reformation, when it lost nearly a third of them.

Exhibited: Biblia cum postillis Nicolai de Lyra, Venice, 1481, Balliol shelf-mark 595 c 1

Illuminated initial after the style of a manuscript from a 15th-century printed Bible, Balliol shelf-mark 595 c 1

Mynors’ priorities in his catalogue are revealed in the astronomical imagery he uses to describe Balliol’s manuscript collections. He presents us with a vision of the manuscripts streaking across the firmament like a comet, its nucleus made of the manuscript books of the College’s medieval Library. Trailing this in a ‘tail’ come the ‘accretions’ of material added in the succeeding centuries. The entries in the catalogue for these items can sometimes be very cursory in comparison to the fuller descriptions of the celebrated medieval treasures that formed the focus of Mynors’ interest. They range from Asian and African manuscripts, through European handwritten books produced after printing became predominant, to notebooks, diaries, letters and fragments of poetry. To be fair some of Mynors’ reticence might be ascribed to a natural caution in describing items in languages with which he was unfamiliar, or because some of them are indeed very minor. Perhaps these items also demonstrate the limits of the notion of a ‘manuscript’ as a descriptive term for a particular category of material. Whilst they are handwritten they often served very different purposes to the medieval books and are often very different formats of material. If they were acquired nowadays the letters and sermons of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley might well have been placed together as a separate collection of personal papers and treated archivally instead of forming manuscripts 410–412, as would the various drafts of poems and essays by Algernon Swinburne (Balliol 1856) and Robert Browning (Honorary Fellow 1867). Do collections of informal notes sit easily alongside highly decorated books commissioned for a prestige library? If a printed book is annotated how extensive do those annotations have to be for it to be considered as a manuscript? What about typescripts? These are hardly handwritten, but equally neither are they published.
BLURRING BOUNDARIES: EARLY MODERN MANUSCRIPTS

Even after the advent of printing, manuscript book production continued well into the 17th century. There were various drivers for this. Some patrons accorded prestige to the luxury hand-crafted book and avoided print. Sometimes a patron might want a decent copy of a specialist or personal work that would not sell in a quantity large enough to merit a print run. It was also not unknown for printed books to be borrowed and copied into manuscript in their entirety for patrons, probably because the print book was itself scarce or expensive. Indeed it seems that Theodore Werken (discussed on page 24–25) made just such a copy of the 1468 edition of Saint Jerome’s works printed by the first printers operating in Italy, Sweynheyn and Pannartz, for the library of Christ Church, Canterbury.

Still, there was a steady decline in the commercial production of manuscripts. When books were produced as manuscripts they tended to be the work of one scribe, sometimes the author, and they were relatively undecorated. Usually they were produced as private gifts or for personal use, rather than purchased. This meant that they began to resemble, and merge with, an expanding array of other types of written material, such as notebooks and diaries. So when later librarians obtained any written material they tended to append this to the existing manuscript collections in a rather haphazard fashion. This was the situation that Mynors encountered at Balliol. The three examples of manuscript books shown here give a feeling for why this strange melange of material might have arisen.

Ballio-fergus is a 17th-century example of a book produced as a manuscript showing the change in production since the 15th century. There is little decoration and it is written on paper. Even so it has been laid out as a book, with a separate title page, a letter to the reader, and other features clearly marked out. The layout on the page is still organised by a series of ruled borders, and the writing is clear and legible with few mistakes. It is a ‘fair’ copy, made for presentation as a gift to the Bishop of Lincoln. And it needed to impress, as the text was part of a drive to encourage the donation of money to the College, which had by this time fallen into penury. Some of this was due to the ravages of the civil wars and the Fire of London, but much of it was also due to financial mismanagement by the author, Henry Savage, the Master of Balliol at the time. In an ultimately unsuccessful bid to avoid outside scrutiny he produced what is the first history of any Oxbridge college using original sources, almost as an extended begging letter to wealthy patrons. Printed in 1668, it did not achieve Savage’s goal, as a later Bishop of Lincoln was forced to intervene in the College’s financial affairs in 1670.

Exhibited: Henry Savage, Ballio-fergus, 1661, MS 255

Title page to MS 255, a manuscript copy of Henry Savage’s Ballio-Fergus, 1661
Music from MS 255 page 149
One of the most celebrated of the College’s later manuscripts shows how important personal notebooks can be and why they are sometimes thought to be a natural extension of the medieval manuscript library. Certainly Mynors’ entry in his catalogue records the contents in detail and runs to over two-and-a-half pages.  

Richard Hill was a merchant from Hitchin, who operated from London, conducting trade with the Low Countries. His main claim to fame is the keeping of this commonplace book. A commonplace book was a private notebook which often contained handwritten copies of texts the owner found inspiring or useful. Hill’s is a particularly splendid example, preserving all sorts of material including historical works, medieval lyric poetry, instructions on performing card tricks, a treatise on breaking horses, recipes for making ink and rat poison, and a French conversation manual, all crammed into the long thin format of book which was often used for accounts. Alongside all of these is a chronicle of his activities which provides valuable insights into trade at this time. Even so, rather like the book of hours on page 9, the book owes its survival to having been lost and forgotten about. In this case it had disappeared behind a bookcase in the Library for ‘a great many years’ only to resurface in 1852.

Exhibited: Richard Hill’s commonplace book, early 16th century, MS 354

In an engraving pasted on the front of an exercise book (MS 343), St Peter walks on the water to rescue a drowning man from the waves. Hopefully this wasn’t emblematic of how the early 18th-century schoolboy who used it to write down his lessons felt about geography. Mynors dates this manuscript from some astronomical notes at the end. Here can be seen the other end of the spectrum of handwritten material. Whilst Richard Hill’s book forms a unique record of historical details and literary sources, these generic school lessons, probably only written out as an exercise, might be seen as sitting rather incongruously alongside splendid illuminated volumes designed to be consulted by scholars. But perhaps that is a matter of perspective.

Exhibited: Geography, or, A Short Way to Know the World, c.1710, MS 343
LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE:
NON-EUROPEAN MANUSCRIPTS

As English trading contacts and global ambitions increased from the 17th century so occasionally books from Africa, Asia and the more distant parts of Europe would find their way into college collections, often bought by alumni travelling around the Mediterranean or the Middle East. Usually, and certainly in the case of Balliol, these piecemeal donations have resulted in a rather small and random selection of sacred or literary texts without any coherence.

At Balliol just over 30 items of this type appear in the manuscript collections. Mostly they date from the 16th–19th centuries, and they are in a range of languages and scripts including Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, Armenian, Ge’ez and a selection of South Asian languages. Mynors’ description of these is often quite laconic, probably because he was unfamiliar with the languages and manuscript cultures involved, and was relying on notes pasted inside the books or advice from other scholars. Certainly he notes in the entry for the Armenian songbook that forms manuscript 471, ‘The contents of this and the four following manuscripts are indicated according to titles written in them. Perhaps they do not deserve much more.’61 In some cases he is even unsure of the language of a text: manuscript 426 is described as ‘Canarese? Unidentified work on 122 palm leaves about 1 1/4 x 13 in. between wooden boards.’62
In recent years scholars have begun to examine these sorts of collections and shed light on their production and book history, and some more comprehensive catalogues such as Fihrist, a Union Catalogue of Manuscripts from the Islamicate World have been produced.

One of the larger and more spectacular non-European manuscripts in Balliol’s collections is this Quran, probably dating to the 16th century. It was apparently obtained by the Reverend G.J. Chester in Cairo, who donated it to Balliol together with the five Armenian manuscripts mentioned above. Opening with pages covered in intricate foliate design and gilt script, it retains its original binding of purple leather with a flap on the back cover that wraps around to the front cover protecting the text block within, a standard feature of bindings in the Islamic world.

Exhibited: Quran, 16th century, MS 376

**SHIFTING AURAS: CELEBRITY LETTERS**

Medieval manuscripts wore their value clearly in their calligraphy and paintings, the products of a whole raft of craftspeople often working on preserving an ancient text. As the modern period progressed so importance increasingly came to be focused on the innovative ideas and words of an individual author. Relics providing unmediated access to the thought processes and lives of celebrity writers became invested with value. Items that might once have seemed ephemeral and spontaneous – notebooks, letters, diaries – took on a status that made them worthy to stand alongside ornate illuminated volumes, and so were included in the manuscript sequence. Thus there are descriptions of drafts of poems, sometimes fragmentary, by the likes of Byron, Browning, Arnold, Swinburne and Clough scattered through the latter part of Mynors’ catalogue, alongside those for letters to George Eliot on the death of her partner George Henry Lewes, and at least two collections of autographs.

This can cause some confusion as one of the jewels of the College’s collections is its extensive holdings of what are described as ‘personal papers’. These are made up of precisely this sort of material, but have historically been stored and described separately; indeed material relating to some authors appears in both sequences. Had some of the items in the manuscript sequence arrived in College...
more recently it is highly likely that they would have been treated as personal papers, and organised and catalogued differently, by author and provenance.

One of the most celebrated poets of his age, Robert Browning was made an Honorary Fellow of Balliol in 1867 at the age of 55, the first person to receive such an award. This was around the period in which he was trying vainly to get his son into the College so that Robert Junior, or ‘Pen’ as he was known, would study under the influence of its pioneering Master, Benjamin Jowett. Browning deeply admired Jowett’s reforms to education at Oxford and his liberal views. Pen’s academic abilities fell short, however, despite both men’s best efforts, failing his matriculation exams in 1868. The Fellowship may have come as some consolation, as did the continuing friendship between Robert Senior and Jowett. Robert became involved in the life of the College, becoming a frequent guest of Jowett, being granted rooms, attending banquets and having plays staged in College.
As a consequence of this Browning began to donate items to the College even before his death, and subsequently more material was added from donors including his son and daughter-in-law. Amongst these are six volumes of his later poems in his own hand, often with corrections, which were used as printers’ copies. These were uniformly bound in a smart morocco with Browning’s arms as a centrepiece. The volume shown on page 34–page 35 contains one of his last major works, *Parleyings With Certain People of Importance in Their Day*, published in 1887, and consisting of dialogues between the poet and literary and artistic figures from history. Like many of his later works this one apparently left many in his audience bemused by its complexity. This and the other volumes were given manuscript numbers 387–392. Another volume of Browning letters forms manuscript 393, but the bulk of the College’s Browning collection, including the ring and the book referenced in the title of his most famous work, *The Ring and The Book*, is kept in archival boxes amongst the personal papers sequence.

Exhibited: Robert Browning, late poems, 1870s–1880s, MS 392

MS 394 is a collection of letters to the great Victorian novelist George Eliot on the death of her partner, the critic and philosopher George Henry Lewes. Lewes was still in an open marriage when they started living together, so their relationship invoked considerable condemnation, as much because of their refusal to conceal it as its actual nature. Nevertheless Eliot obviously considered him her soulmate and they remained together until Lewes’ death. This item is a relic not just of the relationship between two celebrity writers but also of a network of other writers and artists. Amongst those Mynors lists expressing their condolences here are Robert Browning, the artist Edward Burne-Jones, Balliol’s Master Benjamin Jowett, the philosopher Herbert Spence, Lord Tennyson and the Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev. The collection was given to the College, perhaps because several of the writers have a Balliol connection, by the prominent scholar and Jewish figure Leonard G. Montefiore (Balliol 1908), together with a collection of letters to his father, Claude (Balliol 1878), the founder of Liberal Judaism.

Exhibited: Various authors, Letters to George Eliot on the event of the death of George Henry Lewes, 1878, MS 394
Since Mynors’ catalogue was published in 1963 much has changed. In many ways, his work has stood the test of time: the scholarly community still regard it as a definitive description of the medieval collection and the main gateway to the study of Balliol’s manuscripts.

In the last 60 years research has created new knowledge about the manuscripts and it would facilitate further scholarship if these bibliographical discoveries could be added to Mynors’ insights. Doing so now would be a huge undertaking but would maintain the power of the catalogue.

The use of Balliol’s collections has also changed. There is an increasing focus on outreach, opening Balliol’s Historic Collections for learning and inspiration to students, potential applicants, schools, community groups and the public. As a non-specialist, Mynors’ catalogue can be tricky to access. For example, an accomplished Classicist, Mynors never felt the need to translate anything from Latin, so without that language it can be a struggle to navigate a catalogue which covers many Latin titles. In future, we aspire to provide other pathways into the catalogue.

The manuscripts have also moved house twice: in 1974 when the Old Library was fully opened as student study space, and again in 2011 on the completion of Balliol’s Historic Collections Centre in St Cross Church, where they are now kept in an environmentally controlled, secure store, in acid-free boxes.

Conservation and collection care continue with at least one major piece of work on a manuscript annually. Recent projects have involved a major repair and rebinding of the spine to MS 12, the massive printed Josephus which appears on page 15, which was falling apart under its own weight, and MS 232A, a 14th-century Aristotle required recently by researchers from several different projects. Much of this work takes place at the studios of the Oxford Conservation Consortium, which is funded by subscriptions from several colleges and provides not only remedial work but support with maintaining a suitable environment for collections, and training in their handling and sensitive display.

Mynors and his colleagues talked of the possibility of a ‘composite’ catalogue of Oxford MSS, an ambition that is only just being realised now in the form of the online catalogue Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries (https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/). By using an international mark-up language, Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), it will be possible to integrate records from this catalogue with other catalogues of manuscripts at Cambridge University and elsewhere in the world. It is our ambition to find funding for the augmentation, digitisation and mark-up of Mynors’ catalogue so that his work can continue to support the discovery of Balliol’s rich collection, worldwide.

Year 12 students taking part in Balliol’s Floreat access programme meet Mynors’ catalogue and some of Balliol’s manuscripts. Photographs by Stuart Bebb

MS 12 undergoing structural repairs at the Oxford Conservation Consortium. Reproduced by kind permission of OCC
1 Letter from D. Lindsay Keir to R.A.B. Mynors, 3 June 1959, Mynors Papers.
2 Letter from John Rowlands, Oxford University Press to R.A.B. Mynors, 30 December 1960, Mynors Papers.
4 Letter from R.A.B. Mynors to Dr Penelope Bulloch (Librarian 1980–2010), 4 January 1987, Mynors Papers.
7 Hayter, A Wise Woman, p. 72.
12 Winterbottom, Michael, address given at memorial service for Roger Mynors, 27 January 1990, Mynors dossier, p. 4.
13 The estate had been in the Mynors family since at least 1485. Winterbottom, memorial address, pp. 3–4.
15 Winterbottom, ‘Mynors’, p. 379. See also Winterbottom, ‘Mynors’, p. 396, and Winterbottom, memorial address, p. 2, for an anecdote about practical testing of a commentator that he disagreed with by pulling a branch off a tree in the University Parks.
16 ‘Sir Roger Mynors: Manuscripts as Europe’s Living History’, The Times, 19 October 1989, Mynors dossier.
18 Winterbottom, ‘Mynors’, p. 378. See also ‘About the Project’ on the Medieval Libraries of Great Britain database website: http://mlgb3.odeian.ox.ac.uk/about/, Accessed 1 July 2020. There was also talk of the possibility of ‘composite’ catalogue of Oxford manuscripts, an ambition that has not quite been fulfilled to this day. See Winterbottom, ‘Mynors’, p. 384.
21 Ibid, p. 361.
27 Mynors, Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford, p. 68.
30 Winterbottom, Memorial address, p. 1.
37 Ibid, p. xli.
38 Letter from Elis H. Mins to R.A.B. Mynors, 11 October 1939, Mynors Papers.
43 Ibid.
49 Bodleian MS Tanner 75, f.34 as quoted in Mynors, Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford, p. ii.
50 Pettigrew, Andrew, The Book in the Renaissance, p. 16.
52 Ibid, p. iii.
53 Pettigrew, Andrew, The Book in the Renaissance, p. 16.
60 Mynors, Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford, p. 344.
63 Fibhist, A Union Catalogue of Manuscripts from the Islamicate World, online resource: https://www.fibhist.org.uk/.
64 Ibid, p. 358.
68 Ibid p. 364.