

Securing the future of the OUS Library

Background

The OUS Library is found in a pair of cabinets in the ringing chamber at Mary Mag and comprises books and archive material. The printed books are available for reference and teaching and range from the OUS history and Central Council publications through to Sherbourne Teaching Aids (“One Per Learner” book). It is right that these remain readily accessible and these should in our view remain in the tower at Mary Mag.

The old minutes books, Masters’ reports and peal records form a rarely consulted but valuable archive that reveals the Society’s history. While it is important that this archive is available for reference when needed, its long term preservation is critical. The environment in the ringing chamber is unsuitable for the long term preservation of the material, and it is also difficult to track borrowing of individual items which could compromise the integrity of the collection. Given the transient nature of the resident membership, it is impractical for the collection to be entrusted for storage to a particular individual. If the collection is to be preserved, it needs proper storage and maintenance. The Society is not in a position to maintain this archive material so it is proposed that a new home is found for it.

An inventory of items under consideration is appended.

Issues

If the archive collection is to be rehoused outside the direct control of the Society the key issues upon which the Society needs to be comfortable are as follows:

- It will be properly stored in a safe and secure environment;
- It will be physically maintained;
- It cannot be disposed of or destroyed;
- Access is available to members (and other interested parties) whenever reasonably required; and
- It will be possible to add future archive material to the collection to maintain the historical record

Proposed Solutions

The Bodleian Library is the obvious location for rehousing the collection and it has indicated it would very pleased to receive it (and any subsequent additions). There are two options:-

1. The collection is **deposited** with the Bodleian where it will be made available for interested persons. Should the Society wish to take back the collection at a later date it may do so.
2. The collection is **donated** to the Bodleian where it will be made available for interested persons. It will be preserved and will become the property of the Bodleian Library.

The principal difference is that if **deposited**, the Society retains ownership and ultimate responsibility for the collection. If **donated**, the Bodleian acquires full ownership, and thus responsibility. As such it can better manage the collection by preserving items (repair and conservation boxes) thus lengthening the life of the material. The library cannot warrant spending this money on the collection if it is deposited.

The terms of either a **deposit** or a **donation** will be agreed in writing with the Bodleian before passing over the collection. Through these, the Society can decide to whom the collection can be made available, restricting access or making it freely available as it sees fit. It can also protect against future disposal.

At a future date should the Bodleian decide it no longer wishes to retain the collection (this is very unlikely), if **deposited**, it would automatically revert to the Society, if **donated**, theoretically the Bodleian could dispose as it sees fit. To ensure the safety of the collection, a caveat can be placed on the terms of the donation requiring that in the event the Bodleian determines to dispose of it (including subsequent additions), they must first offer it back to the Society free of charge.

Proposal

Either option, with the appropriate safeguards in place, is clearly a major advantage over the current arrangements. The principal difference between the two Bodleian options is ownership *versus* physical maintenance. Provided that, by the terms of a donation, the risks associated with loss of ownership can be sensibly addressed, we believe that donation is in the best interest of the collection, and thus the Society.

Accordingly, we intend to propose at the TGM in Trinity Term 2010 that the OUS **donates** its collection of archive material to the Bodleian Library stipulating that it must be offered back to the Society should the Library no longer wish to retain it and that any person with a bona-fide interest in the collection will be permitted access to it, and that a committee consisting of the President, the Master, the Librarian and ourselves be authorised by the Society to agree terms with the Bodleian.

Michael O'Hagan
Michael A. Williams

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Appendix

A inventory of the items to be passed to the Bodleian Library.

Minute books

1920-1924

Michaelmas 1924 - Michaelmas 1941

Michaelmas 1941 - Michaelmas 1951

Hilary 1952 - Michaelmas 1966

Hilary 1967 - Hilary 1979

Trinity 1979 - Hilary 2003

Master's report books

Hilary 1946 - Trinity 1964

Michaelmas 1964 - Michaelmas 1980

1981 - 1996

Peal books

1882 - 1974

1972 - 1975 (illuminated)

1975 - October 1979 ("copy peal book")

1882 - 1952 (loose-leaf)

1952 - 1972 (loose-leaf)

1972 - 1978 (loose-leaf)

1978 - 1986 (loose-leaf)

Termcards

Michaelmas 1950 - Hilary 2009 [incomplete]

Miscellaneous

Record book 1930 - 1945

Minutes of committee meetings 1980 - 1981

College analysis of peals: to peal no.308

Rule book (rev. 1936)

Membership list: Michaelmas 1965 - Hilary 1976 (includes dinner attendance)

The Office of Compline

Secretary's file (c.1950s)

Freshers' sign-up sheets (various years)

Members' address book (mid 20th century)

Misc dinner menus: 1986 - 2006 [incomplete]

Annual newsletters: 1980, 81, 83 (1), 83 (2), 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 2000 [believed complete]

Annual report: 1882 - 1883 [facsimile reprinted for centenary celebrations 1972]

Photographs (numerous, most black and white)