



INNER TEMPLE
LIBRARY

A History of the Library



17th Century



*Sir Edward Coke, 1552-1634. Attributed to Paul Van Somer.
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Of the Inner Temple before 1500 little is known, though much has been conjectured, for the records of the Inn prior to 1505 have been either lost or destroyed, whilst the earliest recorded mention of the Society itself occurs in a Paston letter of 1440. The date of its foundation therefore must remain a subject for speculation alone. But whilst it is tempting to believe that the Inn must have possessed a Library in the Middle Ages, surviving evidence suggests strongly that if nothing is known of the Library before 1506 it is because there is indeed nothing to know. One thing is certain: if the Library existed before the time of Caxton it would have held legal manuscripts. Yet none are recorded in the earliest surviving catalogue dating from the early eighteenth century. The manuscripts there recorded were all gifts, presented in the age of printing. It is unlikely that the former would have been sold if they existed, nor is there any hint that they were destroyed.

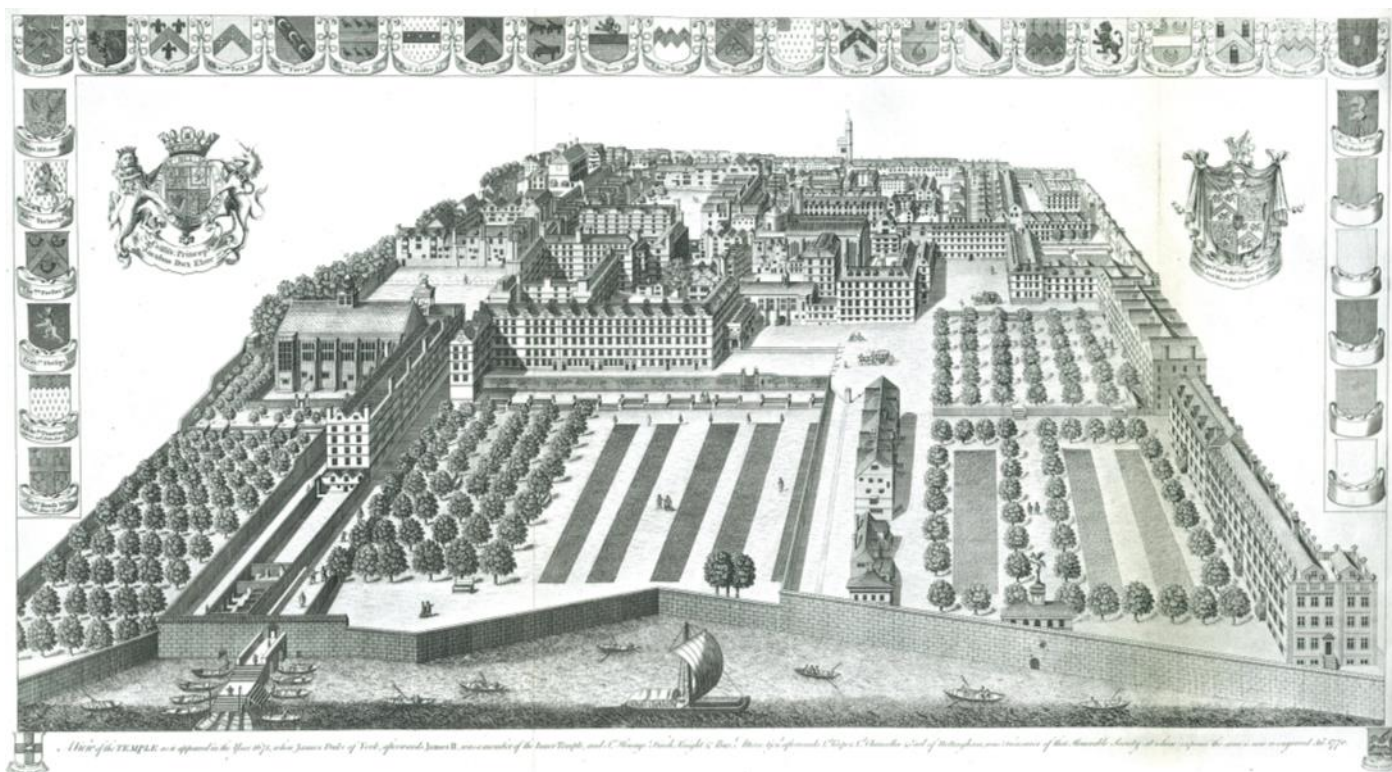
The Library in 1506 consisted of a single room (on the east side of the Hall, probably where the Bench Luncheon Room is at present) set aside for the reading of books and used at a later date as an annexe for dining in when the Hall became overcrowded; and though this practice was stopped in 1606 it was still to be used for moots, for the reception of distinguished visitors at the

feasts, and for meetings of the Benchers (senior members of the Inn). A legal collection at that time could have been contained in a handful of close presses, so that its use for social and other functions was not so unreasonable as it might seem to the modern librarian.

The sixteenth century records are meagre: they contain no direct reference to any books being bought or presented, and there is no mention of any library custodian or cleaner. By 1607 however, a second room had been added, there are records of library books being repaired (the repair of two of them cost 3s. 4d.) and a first reference to a gift when Sir Edward Coke presented his Reports in 1608. The rooms had rushes on the floors, shelves for the books which, by 1609, were padlocked upon iron rods, tin candlesticks upon the tables (though these would only have been lit when the upper Library, which had a special leather chair for the Treasurer, was used for the meetings of parliament) plaster walls and windows frugally fitted with old glass taken from the Temple Church. During the first half of the seventeenth century steady improvements were made to these rooms. The flooring, probably, was tiled, the plaster work renewed, and the leaded windows of the upper Library ornamented by two large curtains.

The physical arrangement of the books is hard to determine. It is unlikely, on the known evidence relating to other libraries, that all the books were chained; probably only a minority and the most valuable at that. The less valuable titles were probably shelved in close presses, the doors being locked and with labels fixed to them describing the contents. As the books increased new shelves were erected upwards, either on the lectern or in the press, to accommodate them; and thus arose the (apparently) curious habit still followed at a number of university libraries (and in use at the Inner Temple until 1950) of numbering or lettering the shelves from the bottom shelf upwards, for the books were shelved at first in accession order.

On Sunday 2nd October 1666 the Great Fire broke out; the wind blew from the east and the City was engulfed. On Tuesday the 4th it reached Whitefriars on the eastern boundary of the Inner Temple. The damage was considerable and the Library wholly destroyed. It is not clear, however, whether the books it housed were saved or not. Rebuilding followed swiftly and by 1668 the Library was in use again. It was wainscotted now and another room added. It would seem from this that the intake of books was now on the increase and this may be supported by the known expansion of law publishing during this half century. Improvements continued. By 1670 the Library was graced by the additional decoration of the Readers' coats of arms while in 1677 a handsome Spanish table was added to the furniture. The Library, however, still served other purposes, and the upper room was used on occasion for recreation, one table alone being reserved for hazard, a popular game of chance at that period. But a greater hazard lay outside, for in 1679 a disastrous fire broke out in the Middle Temple and destroyed a number of residences. This was in winter, the Thames was frozen and water hard to obtain. It is said that the beer from the Temple cellars was used by the fire engines available but this soon ran out and, in what proved an unnecessary effort to prevent it spreading, the small Library of one storey was blown up by gunpowder after its contents had been removed.



Plan of The Temple, 1671. Image copyright © The Inner Temple

18th Century



William Petyt, 1636-1707. English School, late 17th/early 18th c. Image copyright © The Inner Temple

Once more the Library was rebuilt and was in use again by 1680, the upper room still being used for social functions, the drinking of wine by members after dinner and the serving of suppers to the invited guests of the Masters of the Bench. Of its administration during the 17th century little is known. There was, apparently, no catalogue, certainly no official library keeper, and no rules existed to govern the use of the material and the conduct of readers.

Then in 1707 the Inn was offered what has since become known as the Petyt MSS. William Petyt, Treasurer of the Inn in 1701-2, was for many years Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London. He had antiquarian interests, was a scholar of some distinction and, despite later tales to the contrary, was a scrupulously honest collector of ancient documents. At his death he left to the Inn a great mass of manuscripts together with a sum of money to construct a building to house them. By his bequest, which was accepted, he performed a double service, that was to be of lasting benefit.

He provided the Inn with a manuscript collection of a richness which few private societies could otherwise have hoped to obtain; and this in turn provided the spur for the reorganisation of the Library upon a sound administrative basis. His collection, still intact after more than three hundred years, contains 386 volumes and covers a diversity of subjects.

These include Year Books, Registers of Writs, Statutes, Legal Treatises, Precedent Books and Commonplace Books. Among chronicles there is an uncollated early 13th century manuscript of Roger de Hoveden's *Historia Anglorum*, which once belonged to the Abbey of Rievaulx. There is also a long range of Journals of the House of Commons, some of which contain entries which were no longer decipherable when the printed version of the Journals was made. Among noteworthy manuscripts there is an early 12th century Macrobius, and the earliest known Books of Forms in Ecclesiastical Causes, from the end of the 13th century. There are works by Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Robert Cotton and Sir Thomas Bodley, and important original letters from such personages as Lord Burghley, Sir Edward Coke and Sir Christopher Wren.



Macrobius Commentary on Somnium Scipionis. Mid 12th Century. Image copyright © Ian Jones



Original letter of Lady Jane Grey, signed by her as 'Quene'. July 1553. Image copyright © The Inner Temple Library

One of the most notable manuscripts in the collection is "Edward VI's Devise for the Succession". In his own handwriting, it sets out the plan by which the dying king, aged 16, sought to exclude his half-sisters Mary and Elizabeth from the succession in favour of his cousin, Lady Jane Grey. The collection also includes an original letter of Lady Jane Grey, signed by her as 'Quene', the original draft of Sir Edward Coke's 12th and 13th Reports, and a Year Book for a term of Edward I, which seems to be contemporary and which is, besides, unique. There are also autograph letters by Mary and Elizabeth I.

By 1709 the new Library had been built. It included the two former rooms (one of which was to be known as 'the back library') as well as a new room spacious and handsome. Samuel Carter, an "aged and impecunious barrister" was appointed as Library Keeper to attend in the Library as follows: Lady Day to Michaelmas, 9 a.m. - 12, and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.; Michaelmas to Lady Day, 10 a.m. to 12, and 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. His salary was £20 a year. He it was who did the first work on Petyt's books and manuscripts. He produced, besides, a draft catalogue of the books

in the Library, dated 1713, which is still extant, but he died the same year leaving it unfinished. He was succeeded by Joshua Blew, a butler in the Inn, who served for fifty years as Librarian.

On 18th May 1716-17 a Bench Table Order was issued: "No copy or transcript is to be taken by any person of any manuscript books in the Library, and no books to be delivered or taken out of the Library without leave of the Table. This order to be hung up in the Library". Thus was formally established the principle that the Library was essentially for reference and not for borrowing. But though the books were now housed either in close presses or frames with wire guards the manuscripts seem to have been easily available (at least to Masters of the Bench) and were as often consulted out of curiosity as out of need; their availability not being restricted in the modern sense until late in the nineteenth century. If in the early days the Library's acquisition of books had been haphazard it was regulated by a Bench Order of 1713 directing the Treasurer to expend £20 a year on books, but it was the Librarian, Joshua Blew, who was responsible for the actual purchase of books, often their selection too, their binding, and on occasion, the publication of the manuscripts. During his years in office he produced four catalogues. These are notable for the careful and accurate annotations to entries, for Blew had all the instincts of a good bibliographer.

In the eighteenth century the great majority of books purchased were law books; of the books presented the majority were also law books. But antiquarian, historical and literary interests were also held by the members of the Society, and the purchase or presentation of books reflected these interests as is duly recorded in the catalogues subsequently to be issued.

This diversity of interests, continued to the present though in modified form, explains the presence today of many valuable works, all either original or second editions: Higden's *Polychronicon*, Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes* (1810), Hakluyt's *Voyages* (1598-1600), Clarendon's *History* (1702-4), Saxton's *Atlas of England and Wales* (1579) and, Seller's *Atlas Maritimus* 1678. The list of incunabula acquired is shorter but includes The *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493), volumes of statutes printed by Caxton in 1490, as well as two out of the three volumes of statutes issued by Machlinia, the first of the English law printers. On the whole however the purchase policy towards legal and allied materials was highly selective, and books had to prove themselves before they were bought. The forty eight titles purchased in 1723 range in publication date from 1651 onwards but only four of these were current publications.



King's Bench Walk in the 1720s. Image copyright © The Inner Temple

Many problems familiar to modern librarians were already being encountered. By 1729 as a result of gifts the problem of duplication existed and the Librarian drew up a list of seventy nine titles for disposal by sale. Books were being supplied by mistake and having to be returned, whilst overcharging of booksellers' accounts was not uncommon.

The catalogue of 1773, the work of another Librarian, the Rev. William Jeffs, was the last to be in manuscript and was the most scientifically planned to date. It was ordered that "The Librarian ... to make a

complete Catalogue of all the books in the Library and to range the books relating to the several subjects they treat upon in distinct presses so as to compose a separate Library of Law and Equity, Civil Law and Parliamentary proceedings, Classics, General and Biographical History, Theology, Heraldry, Physic, Miscellaneous Books or others relating to any particular science or subject and manuscripts; that in the Catalogue to be made there shall be one column to signify the number of the press, another the shelves, another the name of the book, another the name of the printer and another the date of the year, and that the books may follow in an alphabetical manner, as much as may be, and that all duplicates may be placed together in two or three presses, and that the same may be completed by the first full week in Michaelmas term, and for which this Society do desire his acceptance of ten guineas."

In 1784 Randall Norris, a clerk in the Treasurer's department (he subsequently became Sub Treasurer) was appointed Librarian, and it was during his tenure of office that the earliest printed catalogue, dated 1806, was issued. The surviving evidence suggests that the appointment of Norris was not a happy one. His intellect was not powerful and he possessed none of the qualities that make a true librarian. When he died in 1827 Charles Lamb wrote a famous letter about him to Crabbe Robinson: "In him I have a loss the world cannot make up. He was my friend, and my father's friend, all the life I can remember. I seem to have made foolish friendships ever since ... To the last he called me Charley. I have none to call me Charley now. Letters he knew nothing of, nor did his reading extend beyond the Gentleman's Magazine. Yet there was a pride of Literature about him from being among books (he was Librarian) and from scraps of doubtful Latin which he had picked up in his office of entering new students, that gave him very diverting airs of pedantry. Can I forget the erudite look with which, when he had been in vain trying to make out a black letter text of Chaucer in the Temple Library, he laid it down and told me that "in these old books, Charley, there is sometimes a deal of indifferent spelling", and seemed to console himself in the reflection".



Seller's Sea Atlas, 1678. Image copyright © Ian Jones

19th Century

Randall Norris was succeeded in 1818 by the Reverend William Henry Rowlatt, MA, a member of the Inn (called to the bar in 1804) who had subsequently taken holy orders and was at that time Reader of the Temple Church. Rowlatt is credited with initiating many overdue improvements during his tenure of office.

In 1818 the need for new measures was raised at Bench level. Scots Law, for example, was inadequately represented and it was ordered that books on this subject should be bought at a cost of £200. In 1825 attention was drawn to the fact that the Library was poorly heated. The walls contained apertures which admitted the cold air in winter, and it was suggested that these should be closed by sliding panels, which action would then allow the temperature to rise in the room. It was further suggested that the room to the north of the Library should be fitted with a stove and with shelves for books (by now the great majority of books were kept in open presses); it could then be partitioned so that the Librarian might use it to superintend the room to more advantage "than he could when in the winter season the severity of the cold weather renders it almost impossible for him to be constantly in the Library".

In addition a committee that year issued a new and detailed statement on the duties of the Librarian and directed him to make an "accurate catalogue of the books and manuscripts arranged alphabetically, according to their respective subjects and continue the same as additional books or manuscripts are received into the Library and should also make a shelf catalogue of every book in each shelf. These should be printed copies of such catalogues, two of which should be interleaved ... and there should be six copies kept on the table in the Library, for the use of those frequenting it". Five hundred copies were to be printed and it was issued in 1833, a classified catalogue like its predecessor. A new alphabetical catalogue was ordered in 1842 and published in 1843. It shows the Library's holdings as being approximately 5,500 titles representing over 12,000 volumes. There were, in addition, 492 volumes of manuscripts.

In 1851 the rebinding of the Petyt MSS was initiated, a task that was to extend over twenty years, while in 1856 J E Martin, Librarian to the Duke of Northumberland and already Sub Librarian to the Inn, was appointed to succeed Rowlatt. In 1860 he wrote to the Bench on the need for expanding the Library and this resulted in the accommodation being extended in 1867, 1872 and 1882, by which time it consisted of eight large rooms with a gallery all round. This was sufficient to hold 85% of the entire stock on open access. Heating in winter was by coal fires in large fireplaces and the reading desks had, subsequently, table lights. Admission was strictly confined to members of the Society. Others, including barristers of the remaining Inns, could be admitted only upon special application. The main entrance was via a staircase in the clock tower on the south east corner of the building and the Librarian sat in the open at a desk in the first room.

Martin was succeeded in 1883 by J E L Pickering who had been Sub Librarian since 1869 and it was under his direction that in 1892 a new catalogue was prepared "written by type-writer". This was fourteen years after the first shift-key typewriter was commercially marketed. It was to extend to twenty one volumes, kept up-to-date by revision and retyping, and it was in use for fifty years. It is a tribute to the skill of both Martin and Pickering as library organisers that the printed library plan for the guidance of readers and showing the location of the collection was still effective without alteration in 1939, forty seven years later.

20th & 21st Centuries



*The Library tower before the air raid, 1940.
Image copyright © The Inner Temple*



*The Library tower after the air raid, 10th September
1940. Image copyright © The Inner Temple*

In the early years of the 20th century the Library acquired by gift one of its most valuable and historically important manuscripts. This was a set of four fifteenth century illuminations on vellum which provide the earliest known depictions of the English courts and court dress. They date from about 1460 and show the four courts at Westminster Hall - the courts of Chancery, Common Pleas, Exchequer and King's Bench. The illuminations were presented to the Inn by Lord Darling (Treasurer 1914-1915), who had purchased them at Christie's in 1894.

Between 1941 and 1942 the Library was destroyed by a succession of enemy air raids. The Benchers of the day in 1939 had declined to agree to the removal of any printed books though the manuscripts were taken out of London to safety. It was not until after severe damage was done to the building and several thousand volumes destroyed that the order was given to evacuate the Library, leaving sufficient "day to day" books to carry on with. From September 1941 until the final destruction in 1942 books were blown off the shelves while windows, originally of glass, now of linoleum substitute, were blown in daily. The roof was burnt off, rain and snow had to be contended with, while books that were frozen hard to the shelves had to be levered off with iron bars.

By May 1941 approximately half the book stock had been moved to a dozen country houses. The remainder of the stock was to be destroyed by fire on 10th May, 1941. Among material lost was the John Austin collection of Jurisprudence, presented by his wife after his death. It consisted of one hundred and thirty three volumes of which thirty volumes had MS notes in his hand. All vanished. The catalogue and shelf lists were saved but the subject index was not. All the records of the Library up to 1940: correspondence, memoranda and reports together with the Librarian's files were burnt. The loss of buildings and facilities was costly but these could in time be replaced. The loss in books was tragic, for much that was destroyed was irreplaceable and the task of restoration was not to be accomplished within thirty years.

In 1942 the Library commenced operating again in four rooms in No. 2 King's Bench Walk with a stock consisting of borrowed and hastily purchased books. This accommodation was extended in 1949 and meanwhile a new Library was being planned for construction on the site of the pre-war building. *The Times* architectural correspondent, stressing the integrity of the design of the whole complex, observed that "the juxtaposition of the Inner Temple Hall, Library, and Parliament Chamber, and the thorough destruction of all three, have presented [the architect] with the one opportunity of large-scale replanning the Temple offers." The new Library was opened by The Treasurer, Sir Patrick Spens QC MP in April 1958, in the presence of a distinguished legal gathering which included Lord Kilmuir, the Lord Chancellor. By this time much of the lost essential legal material had been replaced through the generosity of members and friends.

The present Library, designed by T W Sutcliffe, occupies two top floors above the Benchers' private rooms and is built in the shape of an L, thus conforming roughly to the plan of the pre-war Library which it replaced. The main rooms housing the legal collections are in the long arm of the L, looking south over the garden to the river beyond, while galleries run round them at intermediate floor level. There are, in addition, a number of smaller rooms of different shapes and



The new Library, 1958. Image copyright © The Inner Temple

sizes. Built in a style stemming directly from the traditions of the late 17th - early 18th century, the Library is panelled throughout; the woodwork of the tables, book-cases, doors and balustrades being of natural, unstained English oak and the floors of sapele mahogany. A contrast in colour is provided by the chairs which are covered in blue leather.

An April 1958 *Country Life* feature commented on the rooms of the Library that "the heart of every book-lover must immediately be warmed on coming into them; for they are supremely workable-in rooms and give him exactly what he wants, the possibility of reading in comfort, and in spacious and yet intimate surroundings. The smaller rooms are friendly and unassuming; the big rooms extremely dignified, but never pretentious or pompous. The whole library is carefully planned on a principle that was first worked out in the pre-war library, that of giving the maximum variety of choice to the reader, who can sit at tables of every kind and size, and in rooms that range from the grand to the small and informal. The material and workmanship of the fittings are of high quality. The woodwork, including the tables, is of very attractive colouring, with bookcases, doors and balustrades of grey-brown English oak, and floors of polished sapele mahogany. The big pedimented doorways leading into the central room are fine examples of traditional design. The long line of brass candelabra that hang at regular intervals along the centre of the ceiling is one of the pleasantest features of the main rooms."

The books are shelved in cases that run, bay-fashion, around the walls, leaving the centre of each reading room clear for the siting of the readers' desks. The bay windows on the south side contain single desks so that a reader may sit in solitude or in company as the preference takes him. Heating was supplied by oil-fired boilers throughout a succession of pipes concealed in the ceilings, while additional warmth was provided by radiators set in the recesses beneath the windows. Comfort-cooling was installed in the Library in 2001. Brass candelabra in the main rooms provide a general light, the bookcase bays have pendant globes to illuminate the various shelves and, in addition, each reading space is provided with its own table lamp. Other features are the pull-out flaps on the tables for the stacking of used books, and the very fine craftsmanship and design of the moulding on the pedimented doorways leading into the central room. The various MSS collections and the more valuable of the printed books are housed in a fire-proof strong room, leading off the Librarian's office which commands the staircase approach to the Library.

The recataloguing of the Library which was necessary as a result of the war-time losses was a major undertaking and was not completed until 1960. It took the form of a sheaf catalogue, with a supplement on cards which was maintained until the introduction of online cataloguing in 1991. With the initial recataloguing of the bookstock completed, attention was turned in 1960 to the cataloguing of the manuscript collection.

Dr James Conway Davies was invited by the Masters of the Bench in 1960 to compile for publication a detailed catalogue of all five of the manuscript collections - the Petyt Manuscripts, the Barrington Manuscripts, the Records of the Inner Temple, the Mitford Legal Manuscripts, and the Miscellaneous Manuscripts. Conway Davies was a retired academic, some time Reader and Head of the Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic in the University of Durham. The resulting work, entitled *Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Library of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple*, was published by Oxford University Press in three volumes in 1972, though Dr Davies had died in the previous year, while in the final stages of its preparation. In December 1976 agreement was reached between the Inn and World Microfilms Publications Ltd for the publication of the whole manuscript collection in a microfilm edition. The results were published on 256 reels of microfilm in 1978.

In the new post-war building the Library occupied not only the two upper floors but also the basement, in which older and less frequently used material was stored, at first in fixed metal shelving, replaced in the 1960s by compact mobile shelving units. In 1991 it was decided by the Inn that the basement should be converted for use as a student common room and bar. The Library would in due course have additional space in the basement of a new building but in the meantime the older legal material, together with the non-law collections then housed in the gallery (the history, biography, heraldry, genealogy, topography and literature collections), was sent into storage. The return of the stored books, to their new home in what had by now been officially named the Littleton Building, was completed in 1997.

Perhaps the most important development of recent years has been automation. Since its introduction in 1991, information technology has taken on an ever more important role in the Library. Users can now access the online catalogues of all four Inns of Court as well as a variety of legal databases via the Internet.

The Library has had its own website since 1997 and Library staff also maintain a gateway site, AccessToLaw, which provides annotated links to over 1,300 free legal and parliamentary websites.

In 2007 the Library launched a selective Current Awareness blog, which provides up-to-date information on new case law, changes in legislation and legal news. Users can subscribe to the blog via RSS feed or email or follow the blog on Twitter. Other developments include an electronic newsletter, legal research FAQs online and a virtual tour. The Library has also created a Facebook page to promote its services and as an additional way of communicating more directly with users. Some of these initiatives led to the Library team winning a Halsbury Award for Best Legal Information Service (Non Commercial Sector) in October 2007. The team also won the BIALL Wallace Bream Award 2012 for its "considerable contribution to the legal information profession".

More than 500 years since its inception, the Library (with a staff of nine) still provides and develops services to meet the needs of its two main categories of user: members of the Bar and the judiciary, and student members studying for the Bar examinations. It offers users access to a wide range of print and electronic resources in a comfortable and quiet working environment, with over 90 reader places. This includes a reference library of 70,000 volumes, the most up-to-date editions of major practitioner texts; a comprehensive archive of old editions of practitioners' works; specialist Commonwealth and Scottish collections; as well as 22 PCs with access to free and subscription-based legal web services and Wi-Fi access for use with readers' own devices.

Within this deceptively tranquil setting of book-lined shelves and oak panelled walls it aims to offer a service for the 21st Century which combines traditional sources with new technology for the benefit of its readers.



Internet access in the Library. Image copyright © Yael Schmidt

This leaflet is an edited, updated and illustrated version of A Sketch of the Inner Temple Library by Wallace Bream, Librarian and Keeper of Manuscripts 1965-1990.

The Library Today

The Library offers the following facilities and services:

- a quiet environment for study, with over 90 reader places
- a comprehensive collection of English legal materials, including the most up-to-date editions of major practitioner texts
- an extensive archive of old editions of practitioners' works
- specialist Commonwealth & Scottish collections
- collections which are all on-site and easily accessible
- a range of commercial legal research databases
- PCs for online research, access to email and word processing
- free Wi-Fi
- photocopying and printing facilities
- a document supply service for barristers in chambers
- an enquiry service (in person, by telephone and by email)
- assistance with online searching and legal research
- an overnight loans scheme for barristers
- legal research training for pupils
- legal research FAQs on our website
- tours for students and pupils, plus a virtual tour on our website
- web access to the library catalogues of the four Inns
- AccessToLaw, a gateway site providing annotated links to selected UK, Commonwealth and worldwide legal websites (www.accesstolaw.com)
- Current Awareness blog for legal news, changes in legislation and new case law (www.innertemplelibrary.com)
- quarterly electronic newsletter
- a Facebook page with information on Library services, news and events (www.facebook.com/innertemplelibrary)
- range of guides available in the Library or for downloading from our website
- equipment and software for users with hearing or visual impairment

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