Archives for administrators or archives for antiquarians? A history of archive cataloguing in four Oxford Colleges

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The history of the book is a well advanced field, as is the study of medieval manuscripts, but the history of record keeping and archives has been left somewhat behind. There is no general history of British archival administration or archival thought, and only a few short case studies that go further back than the twentieth century.[2] This paper is not only offered as another case study, or rather case studies, but also suggests an hypothesis as to the motivations and conceptions that have led institutions to keep written records over the last five hundred years. It examines the archive catalogues and calendars which exist in four Oxford colleges and attempts to understand why they were compiled.[3] A model is proposed that archives have at various times been kept either as an aid to administration, or as a source for antiquarians and historians, and that the emphasis between these two positions has often shifted.

University College is the oldest of the four Colleges under examination, tracing its origins back to a bequest made in 1249.[4] It was also for many years the poorest College of the four: the number of its Fellows only consistently reached double figures in the 1650s, and every valuation of the Oxford Colleges' wealth put it in the lowest division. Like many small Colleges, however, it possessed a unique selling point: until the 1850s most of its Fellowships and Scholarships were open only to men from north-eastern England, and the College became very popular with people from that area. In the seventeenth century between a quarter and a third of all its undergraduate members came from Yorkshire.

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[1] Versions of this paper have been presented to the Oxford Bibliographical Society, and at Seminars at LUCAS (Liverpool University), University College London and the National Archives. We are grateful to those present for their thoughts and comments.

[2] They include Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*; Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*; Hallam, 'Nine Centuries'; Longley, 'Archbishop's Muniments' and 'Capitular Muniments'. Woolgar, 'Two Oxford Archives', which examines the archives of Magdalen and Corpus Christi colleges is of particular relevance to this paper. Procter, 'Life Before Jenkinson', and Shepherd, *Archives and Archivists* explore archival thought in the twentieth century.

[3] The four colleges are those whose archives are administered by the authors; they have not been selected for any particular reason.

[4] See further Darwall-Smith, *University College*.

The next of the four to be founded, in 1341, was The Queen's College.[5] Its founder, Robert de Eglesfield, was not a rich man, but he was able to persuade others to endow his College. He was chaplain to Philippa of Hainault, queen to Edward III, and through her influence the King was to be the most important patron of the College, making the Provost and Fellows the perpetual Warden of God's House, with a large estate in Southampton. Like University College it was small and associated with a particular part of the country: the north-west, and many of its members came from Cumberland and Westmoreland.

Magdalen College was founded in 1458 by William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester.[6] Bishop of a wealthy diocese, and unencumbered by close family, Waynflete saw Magdalen College as his darling project. Few Oxbridge Colleges had so felicitous a start: for twenty years Waynflete acquired property after property, showering them on Magdalen, and paid for sumptuous buildings to accommodate the College's members. When Waynflete drew up Magdalen's first statutes in 1480, it was wealthy enough to support forty Fellows, thirty Scholars, and a Chapel Choir. Its archives are thus the most extensive of the four Colleges discussed here — and indeed probably only New College and Christ Church elsewhere in Oxford can rival them.

The archives of St. John's College, however, are not much smaller. It was founded in 1555 by Sir Thomas White, former Mayor of London.[7] He was a leading member of the Merchant Taylor's Company, and it was from the Company's school that the majority of the College Fellowships were to be filled. White endowed his College with considerable estates, which made the archive larger than Queen's and University College, but it was not until the nineteenth century development of the suburb known as North Oxford, that it became one of the larger College collections.

The earliest known lists of documents found in these Colleges come from Magdalen, where three incomplete lists of archives survive from the 1480s — just when William

[5] See further Magrath, *The Queen's College* and Hodgkin, *Six Centuries*.
[6] See further Brockliss, *Magdalen College*.
[7] See further Stevenson & Salter, *Early History* and Costin, *St. John's College*.

Waynflete was making over to Magdalen the properties which he had acquired for it.[8] One list, dating from about 1480, is a checklist of 191 bundles of documents which had been placed in six bags, presumably for transit; the second list, made in Michaelmas 1481, lists the contents of some boxes of deeds; and the third one listed some bags containing administrative papers. These lists are very summary, as can be seen from this typical extract from the first list:

> 22 *Munimenta concernences Bukkeshede sive Hertishorne* (Muniments concerning Bukkeshede or Hertishorne)
> 23 *Item alia munimenta concernen' dictum Hertishorne in Southwark* (Item other muniments concerning the said Hertishorne in Southwark)
> 24 *Item alia munimenta concernen' eundum locum de Hertishorne* (Item other muniments concerning the same place of Hertishorne)

These lists are little more than *aides-memoires*. Although each item is given a number (given in arabic rather than roman form), none of these were written on the deeds, and it is unclear whether this was any more than a convenient means of checking that one had the right number of bundles of deeds.

Whether or not the numbers in these lists were ever to be used as reference numbers, there still remains remarkable evidence for how the early Fellows of Magdalen stored their archives. The College's first statutes of 1480 order that its charters and muniments be kept in a secure room, in chests and cupboards, and that these records should not be made available to third parties except in very special circumstances.[9] The College's Muniment Room, which was fitted out at around this time precisely for the purpose of storing the archives in a tower adjoining the chapel, survives almost totally unchanged from when it was first built. It contains 27 wooden cupboards, each one holding several wooden boxes of deeds, which have been constructed at various times. For example, the College's domestic accounts for 1496/7 include a payment of

[8] Magdalen College Archives [MCA] Adds. 96. See too the discussion in Woolgar 'Two Oxford Archives', 258–60.
[9] *Statutes of ... Magdalen College*, 75–6.

forty shillings to one Robert Carew for 'making boxes for evidences to be put in the same boxes in the tower next to the Chapel'.[10]

Over 130 boxes survive, containing over 12,000 deeds, and many of them still bear the labels stuck on them five hundred years ago, which record the name of the town or manor whose deeds are contained therein. They have been arranged by county (for example, all boxes of deeds concerning Lincolnshire properties are in cupboards 1 and 2, but the Sussex boxes are in cupboards 7 and 8), and are unrelated to any of the 1480s lists: the boxes contain different groups of documents, and bear no numbers. By the end of the fifteenth century, therefore, there is a very basic finding system in the Magdalen archives: one looks for the box labelled with the right location, gets the box out, and then seeks the right deed. This is an archive designed for administrative use, rather than for the antiquarian.

There was, however, one additional finding aid to some of the College's archives. The central site of the College occupied that of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, which William Waynflete had had closed down, and its site and all its estates transferred to his new foundation. With the land came all the Hospital's title deeds, and several administrative papers, including a cartulary which had been created in about the 1270s.[11] Although already a document of some antiquity when it came into the College's hands, the early Fellows continued using it for a while: it was rebound in the late fifteenth century, and contains transcripts of some deeds dating from after the foundation of the College.[12] However, it seems to have fallen out of use after 1500, and made its way to the College's library.[13] The President and Fellows had presumably decided that it was easier to go up to the Muniment Tower and sift through the deeds themselves.

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[10] *Pro factura capsarum pro evidenciis in turri iuxta capellam in eisdem capsis situandis*; MCA LCE/2, fo. 84v.

[11] MCA MS 275. Information on its binding taken from a bibliographical study of the cartulary by Maria Kalligerou of the Oxford Conservation Consortium.

[12] For example, MCA MS 275, fols. 18, 32 and 43 (copies of deeds dated 1496, 1500, and 1477 respectively).

[13] Magdalen College's archives also include cartularies for two other foundations annexed by Waynflete, namely the Hospital of St. James and St. John at Brackley, Northants., and the Benedictine Priory of Sele, Sussex (respectively MCA MSS 273 and 274), but there is no evidence that either volume was used after their transfer to the College.

The early history of the St. John's archive is similar to that of Magdalen. The Foundation Statutes (heavily borrowed from Corpus Christi College) are even more explicit than those of Magdalen, specifically instructing the Fellows to preserve 'Evidences, Charters, Muniments, and other Writings' so that 'the men of our College, when challenged to suits and arms, may be always ready, and not march to the pitched battle unarmed'.[14] It was therefore documents of title that most concerned the Fellows and within decades of the Foundation, they were keeping lists of important College papers. Several of these survive, including a roll compiled in the 1580s or 1590s entitled 'State, Scite and Foundation of the Colledge'.[15] This lists twenty-four documents relating to the foundation in chronological order, and assigns each document a number which was written on them. Another list, also from the late sixteenth century, bears the title 'Evidences delyvered unto ye Presydent & schollers of St John Baptist colledge in Oxon by Rychard Owen of godstow'.[16] This is much rougher than the rolled list, and the numbers on this were never copied onto the documents. It therefore seems likely that the first list was a basic finding aid and the latter just a checklist to ensure that all the documents were received from Richard Owen.

In the sixteenth century the College was therefore aware of the administrative importance of knowing what title documents it held, but only in the early seventeenth century was it deemed necessary to catalogue the complete archive. The book was entitled 'The Catalogue of Evidences of Saint Johns Colledge' and was compiled some time after 1615, the date of the last entry in a sixteenth century hand.[17] It begins with the Foundation of the College, copying out the list of documents from the sixteenth century roll and then turns to each of the College estates, concerning itself only with legal estates records and listing all of the documents in roughly chronological order. There seems to be no discernible logic behind the order in which the estates are listed, save that recently purchased ones are at the back of the book.

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[14] *Ut in nostro collegio provocati ad lites et arma semper sint parati, nec ad pugnam in acie progrediantur inermes, statuimus ut eorum arma, hoc est, evidentiae, chartae, munimenta et reliqua scripta*. *Statutes of … St John's College*, 92.

[15] St John's College Archive [SJCA] MUN I.48.

[16] SJCA MUN V.B.1.

[17] SJCA Cat 1. Comparisons of this hand with the signatures of senior fellows in the College Register (SJCA ADM I.A.2) suggests some resemblance with that of Christopher Ryley, a Fellow of the College from 1607 to 1634, but not enough of his writing exists to be sure. There is no record of a payment for compiling this catalogue in the accounts for 1616-25, and they do not survive between 1604 and 1616.

This arrangement probably reflects how the documents were stored, almost certainly in drawers as at Magdalen, and the author of the catalogue sees no reason to ensure that bundles relating to separate properties in the same estate are listed together. For example, the manor, the parsonage, and the Chantry house of Fyfield constitute three different sections.[18] Within each section every document is assigned a number, which was written onto it, ensuring that it could easily be found. This is a more sophisticated system than the box labels used at Magdalen, because one could look for a specifically numbered document. It also introduces the hierarchical concept because two levels exist: the section and the numbered documents within it.

It is clear that this catalogue, and the arrangement behind it, was motivated by administrative needs, that is the ability to quickly locate particular documents. The item descriptions are directed to this end. An example chosen at random reads: 'A Feoffment by John Temple to the President and Schollers of Saint Johns of the premises after the death of Robert Temple, dated 4 May 11 Elizabeth';[19] it provides only enough information to identify the document, nothing more. This catalogue was created in order to assist the President and Fellows in the management of the College. Indeed its title, 'A Catalogue of Evidences', reflects the concern in the Statutes about proving title to the College's estates, and like other administrative aids it was kept in the Great Chest.

The 1610s also saw Magdalen's second attempt to put its title deeds in order. A group of Fellows numbered every single one of them, and produced a catalogue of the result.[20] The catalogue is in several hands. They cannot all be identified, but one of them was almost certainly that of William Langton, President of Magdalen from 1610–26. As with the earlier cataloguers in this study, Langton and his team were only listing title deeds — no attempt was made to list any financial or administrative records, or miscellaneous estate papers. The one exception was a group of documents relating to the foundation of the College, and to various royal and papal letters patent and grants. Just like their contemporaries at St. John's, the approach of Langton and

[18] SJCA Cat 1, fols. 21r, 32r, 34r.
[19] SJCA Cat 1, fo. 19r.
[20] MCA CP/3/31. This catalogue is discussed in more detail in Woolgar 'Two Oxford Archives', 260–4.

his team was straightforward enough. The medieval division of boxes in the cupboards in the Muniment Tower was preserved; their task was to list and assign a number to the contents of each one. Each entry briefly notes the type of document — grant, lease, quitclaim, etc. — the main parties involved, and provides a date, where possible. Entries are written in Latin or English, or both, usually according to the original language of the deed, as can be seen in these two adjoining examples:

> *Carta Johannis att more et Caterine uxori eius Johanni Roger seniori et Johanni Roger juniori unius grove vocat' Heighwood infra villat' de Ramesdell etc. H 6 35* [deed of John att More and Catherine his wife to John Roger Sr. and John Roger Jr. of one grove called Heighwood within the village of Ramesdell, etc. 35 Hen VI]
>
> An Acquittance of Ingelram at more for x li wch he acknowledgeth to have received from our Founder Edj 4 21^{o} [ie. 21 Edw IV][21]

Each Fellow was given bundles of folded sheets on which to do his listing, which were then bound together when the work was complete. The properties were arranged roughly by county, and the miscellaneous documents slipped in at the end. According to the cataloguers' numbering system, the two deeds quoted above bear the references Skyres 109–110, being the 109th and 110th deeds in the Skyres box (Skyres — also Scures — being a manor in Hampshire). The Magdalen team are observing, so to speak, a two-level hierarchical structure similar to that employed at St. John's. Langton and his team seem generally to have left the deeds where they found them, even where they were misplaced, but they may have exercised some discreet weeding. When the deeds were recatalogued in the 1860s and 1870s, two small chests were found which contained many miscellaneous deeds and papers, mostly relating to properties not owned by the College. It is possible that these deeds had been extracted in the 1610s and put aside.[22]

So far Langton and his team may have appeared fairly efficient. There was, however, one area where the task's magnitude evidently caused some corners to be cut: each sequence of deeds is numbered in a completely random order. Each cataloguer seems merely to have pulled out a deed from a box, wrote a number on it in ink, summarised

[21] MCA CP/3/31, fo. 237.
[22] The recataloguing of the 1860s and 1870s is discussed on pp. 000–00 below.

its contents, and then extracted another one, until the box was empty and every deed had a number.

Magdalen's catalogue, therefore, is not easy to browse. Nevertheless it is a sort of filing system, in which, if one wants quick access to the deeds of a given manor, one can cast one's eye over the list (perhaps with the original box alongside) to find the required deed. The cataloguers may even have attempted to make the list more usable: some entries have hands pointing at them, or else certain words are underlined in the summaries, to draw the reader's attention to something important.

Further up the High Street, there is no extant evidence that Queen's took any interest in its archives until the seventeenth century. In 1644 the antiquary Gerard Langbaine succeeded Brian Twyne as the Keeper of the University Archives, and two years later he was elected Provost of Queen's. At the University he added to Twyne's catalogue, but he did not see the need to create a similar catalogue to the records at Queen's. Instead he immersed himself in those parts of the archive that were most useful in dealing with the larger estates that Queen's held, particularly the town of Southampton, and the village of Renwick in Cumberland.

His aim in working in the archive was to facilitate his administration of the College. He made notes on the Renwick court rolls, and on contemporary rentals he made comparisons with old rents found in the archive;[23] an interesting example of using historical records to assist contemporary administration. He produced two manuscript works relating to Southampton. One he described as 'Tenements of God's House in the town of Southampton by leases', which acts as an index to the lease ledgers, listing the most recent leases for the College's Southampton tenements.[24] The second book is, for our purposes, rather more interesting. This Langbaine describes as 'Charters of the tenements, etc. in the parish of St. Michael, Southampton'.[25] It is a list of 263 medieval charters with, after the first entry, usually just one line for each document, such as 'Ricardus le Rydere filius Johannis concedit Johanni dicto Fyfmark et Katerina uxori' (Richard le Rydere, son of John, grants to John called Fyfmark and

[23] See for example, Queen's College Archive [QCA] 5A47 and 5A68.
[24] *Tenementa Domus Dei in villa Southampton per Indenturas dimissa*. QCA 4G105.
[25] *Chartae de Tenementis etc in parochia Sancti Michaelis Southampton* QCA Estates: Southampton, old catalogue.

Katherine, his wife) or even just 'Johannus Flemyng quiet clamat Domui Dei' (John Flemyng quitclaims to God's House).[26]

This was clearly intended to be a catalogue for Langbaine numbered each entry and wrote that number on the document. However, as at Magdalen, there is no attempt to arrange the documents in any conceivable order. They are certainly not chronological, but nor are they arranged by the tenement they refer to. Indeed, most of the entries do not even identify the relevant piece of land. Occasionally there are two documents side by side that do refer to the same property, which suggests that Langbaine placed relevant documents together when they came to hand, but he made no attempt to impose an order upon them. For example, numbers 2 and 3 refer to the same property, but another property is dealt with in documents 1, 5, 12 and 176, the last of these being the earliest in date of them all.[27] This could be seen as a regression from the catalogues compiled at St John's and Magdalen, as it uses just one hierarchical level – it is simply a list of documents. But Southampton was just one of the College's estates, and would therefore in the Magdalen and St John's catalogues have constituted a single series, in other words a long list just like this. Langbaine is therefore thinking along similar lines to his contemporaries. He may have been a great antiquary, but like Langton and the St John's cataloguer before him, his work on his own College's archives was purely administrative.

Meanwhile no recorded cataloguing activity had yet taken place at University College, although in the 1560s its then Master, Thomas Caius, had worked in its archives for his history of Oxford.[28] At the end of the seventeenth century, however, things were changing. Obadiah Walker, Master in 1676–89, erected some pigeonholes to store the archives, but this system proved difficult to maintain, and quickly broke down.[29] Then, in the 1690s, a Fellow called Hugh Todd, an antiquarian who specialised in the history of his native Cumberland, attempted to sort out the records. Almost all that survives of his work is a transcript compiled by Todd himself and an unnamed assistant of most of the College's deeds relating to some houses which it

[26] QCA Estates: Southampton, old catalogue, fols. 2, 125.
[27] QCA Estates: Southampton, old catalogue, fols. 1, 25.
[28] This is made clear from his comments about documents in the College archives in Caius, *Vindiciae Antiquitatis*, ii, 429–32.
[29] Smith, *Annals*, xix.

owned in Newcastle. The transcript is accurate enough, but the deeds have been listed in one continuous (and wholly random) numerical order, rather like the catalogues compiled by Langton and his team at Magdalen and by Langbaine at Queen's. Todd also wrote these numbers on the relevant deeds themselves. However, Todd soon abandoned his cataloguing, as his ecclesiastical career blossomed and he took up a living back in Cumberland.[30]

Todd's attempts are typical of the cataloguing which have been seen in all four Colleges since the early seventeenth century, and this is an appropriate moment to consider their common features. There are four common aspects to these archivists' work: they tend to operate with merely two hierarchical levels; there is little attempt to organise the documents at item level; there is no evident consciousness of historical scholarship; and there is a very narrow understanding of what constitutes archival material. One must remember, however, that these Colleges' wealth lay in their lands, and their privileges in their foundation charters and related documents. The Colleges had to guard both properties and privileges vigilantly, and therefore, at a time when the archives were used almost entirely for administrative purposes, the documents relating to properties and privileges were the only ones which had to be reasonably accessible.

After Hugh Todd had abandoned his archival work at University College in the mid-1690s, another Fellow immediately took up the challenge: one who, in the next decade, would produce the most thorough and sophisticated system of archive cataloguing yet devised in any of the four Colleges. His name was William Smith. One of University's many Yorkshiremen, Smith matriculated from there in 1668. He was elected a Fellow in 1675, and remained in post until 1704, when he became Rector of Melsonby, a pleasant College living near Richmond in Yorkshire, where he remained until his death in 1734.[31] He was evidently not an easy man to work with: the diarist Thomas Hearne recalled that 'This Smith, when of Oxford, used to be called (from his dark muddy head) Puzzle Cause and often Old Crust'. [32]

[30] Todd's career is described in *ODNB*. His cataloguing activities are described in Smith, *Annals*, xix–xxii, and his list of Newcastle documents is University College Archives [UCA] UC:E5/2/MS2/2.
[31] Smith's career is summarised in *ODNB*.
[32] Salter (ed.), *Thomas Hearne*, 9.

William Smith was the first archivist in the four Colleges to leave some record of his methodology. In 1728, he produced a book called *The Annals of University College*. Written in a great hurry, it is a maddening work, resembling a non-fictional *Tristram Shandy*. All attempts at a structure break down regularly, as the author is diverted by a succession of digressions with more or less relevance to the matter in hand. Yet Smith's scholarship was sound. His book has been rightly hailed as the first scholarly history, not just of University College, but of any Oxford or Cambridge College, and his vigorous destruction of the College's legendary links with King Alfred, and his reconstruction of its genuine early history became the basis for all further histories of the College.

In the preface to the *Annals*, Smith described his activities in the archives. He was aghast at Hugh Todd's attempts at cataloguing:

> When I came to examine this Transcript, I found them all out of Place and Order, as perchance the first last, the last tenth, and the twentieth in some other Place, without any Coherence or Dependance one upon another ... So that I was forced to cast the Copy quite aside, and betake me to the Originals, and sever them into so many Heaps, as there were single Houses, or Quit-Rents out of several Houses.[33]

Earlier he had advised that 'such as are possessed of many old Records ... do not take them as they find them, 'till they be disposed by some skillful Person into the Order that the due Nature of them requires'.[34]

Smith practised what he preached. First he sorted out all the documents which related to the College's properties, beginning with those in Oxford itself. These were first arranged by parish, and then, within each parish, the documents relating to individual properties were listed separately, and placed in the order in which the properties had been purchased. Each 'heap' of documents was then arranged in chronological order. Then he turned to estates outside Oxford, again listing them in the order in which they had been purchased.

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[33] Smith, *Annals*, xxi.
[34] Smith, *Annals*, xx.

Smith's treatment of the deeds relating to the College's Newcastle estates provides a good example of his working methods.[35] Todd had listed all the deeds in a single order, but Smith divided them into well over twenty 'heaps' — or 'series', to use modern terminology. Most of them relate to individual properties in Newcastle, each of whose histories was teased out by Smith, but there is also a series of deeds relating to the purchase of the properties by the College, and another one devoted to leases of the property once the College had taken it over.

None of the earlier cataloguers in this survey had shown such sensitivity to the arrangement of title deeds as Smith, but there was more to come. Smith also departed from his predecessors in taking a much broader view of what documents he catalogued. Having worked his way through the title deeds concerning the Newcastle estate, Smith also found papers relating to legal disputes, correspondence between the College and its Newcastle tenants, and some miscellaneous notes and memoranda, such as reports on the properties compiled in the 1590s. All these were likewise sorted out into different series relating to the Newcastle estates, so that there was a correspondence series, and an estate memoranda series, and separate series concerning each legal dispute.

Elsewhere in the archives Smith encountered financial papers, documents relating to the building of the College's Main Quadrangle from the 1630s to the 1670s, and the personal papers of former Masters. There were even some documents which had no link with the College at all, such as some building accounts of the 1450s for the Divinity Schools.[36] All these papers were similarly sorted into sections and placed in order within each series. Even if, at the end, Smith had to admit defeat, naming the final series in his list 'Miscellanea extrinseca' — or miscellaneous documents completely unrelated to the College — nevertheless, he considered that such material had to be processed, because it was in the archives.

Smith also took an inclusive view of the chronological span of archives. No document was too new not to be catalogued: some of the documents sorted by Smith date from

[35] Smith's original catalogue of the deeds is at UCA UC:AR2/MS1/2, 235–308.
[36] UCA UC:P61/F1/1. The College's Master in the 1450s, John Martyn, was a member of the committee overseeing the building of the schools, and the accounts presumably ended up in the archives through him.

only a few months before he left Oxford for Yorkshire. It is not known what criteria Smith employed for retaining records, but he clearly saw himself, in modern terms, as being both an archivist and a records manager.

When Smith had created his 'heaps', he numbered them up. For his series, he employed the term bundle (or 'fasciculum'), and then he put his bundles into boxes. The bundles were as large as the series they comprise. Some bundles, therefore, may comprise only a couple of documents, others almost twenty. Each box (called 'Pyx') was assigned a letter of the Roman or Greek alphabet, and each bundle in the box was given its own unique number. Thus each document bears a unique three-level number, which Smith wrote on it.[37] For example, the first deed in the Newcastle collection bears the reference 'Pyx P fasciculum 1 no. 1', and one of the memoranda on the estate from the 1590s has the reference 'Pyx Q1 fasciculum 6 no. 1'. Smith, in fact, has created a much more modern system of arranging documents than any of his predecessors so far encountered: his Pyxides are analogous to the modern fonds,[38] his fascicula to the series, and his individual documents to the item. This is a huge step forward from the work of Hugh Todd.

Unfortunately, Smith's theoretical framework was too closely tied to the way in which the documents were stored. If all the documents emanating from one source could go into one box, there was no problem. The trouble started when they would not. The Newcastle papers, for example, had to go into three boxes, namely Pyxides P, P2, and Q1. A greater problem was posed by University College's medieval account rolls, of which there are almost two hundred. In modern terms, these form a coherent and obvious single series, and Smith did indeed arrange them in chronological order, but in order to store them, Smith had to divide them into almost twenty bundles and put these into three boxes, giving them appropriate numbers, starting with Pyx EE fasc. 1 no. 1 and ending with Pyx HH fasc. 3 no. 13.

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[37] By writing a unique reference number on each document, Smith was improving the security of the collection, for each document, when borrowed, could be easily returned. It is also easier to spot a missing document when each has a unique reference. There is, however, no evidence that Smith was motivated by matters of security.

[38] Strictly speaking, we should perhaps say 'sub-fonds', but 'fonds' will be retained here for the sake of clarity.

Smith created two types of finding aids for the University College archives. A comment in a letter written by him in February 1709 when he was in Yorkshire refers to a 'short Index' which he left in the College archives, but this has long been lost.[39] Alongside this, however, Smith also filled eleven volumes with transcriptions or summaries of every single document which he had sorted.[40] He also copied extracts from the College register, and from other volumes in the archives, such as more recent accounts. He commented on the documents too: transcripts for those dating from his lifetime are enlivened with his waspish comments. He also described seals on documents. For example, of a document of 1312 relating to College property near Hull, he described its seal as being 'in green wax, y^{e} 1st about y^{e} bigness of a mill'd sixpence, haveing a dog passant upon it & lower a swan Inscripts STEPHAN' DE PAGULA'.[41]

Unfortunately Smith also lets slip what he did to a document to read it. Sometimes there were accidents: of one title deed, he candidly writes: 'There was a seal of white paste to this deed but it being old & brittle broak off & crumbled away while I was perusing it'.[42] Smith also took a robust line if he was unable to read a document. Of a grant of 1356, he says of his transcript that it was taken 'from a charter faded away or pale in every part before it was daubed by me in water of gall'.[43] Gall makes letters darker, so that they can stand out, and be more legible. Unfortunately, once a document has been daubed in gall, it gradually darkens. There are several items in University College's archives which are now little more than murky brown parchment rectangles, thanks to Smith's recourse to his pot of gall and water.

Smith's ordering of University College's archives marks a clear advance on what had happened at Magdalen and St. John's, and one may reasonably ask whether he had any model to follow. The answer almost certainly lies in the work of Brian Twyne (1581–1644), the first Keeper of the University Archives. For, in the Preface to his *Annals*, Smith discusses Twyne's work there, albeit critically: 'Those [documents]', he wrote, 'that Mr. Twine understood, its like he placed in the due Order he found

[39] Bodleian Library MS Ballard 16, fo. 77.
[40] Now UCA UC:AR2/MS1/1–11
[41] UCA UC:AR2/MS1/2, 4.
[42] UCA UC:AR2/MS1/1, 6
[43] *Ex charta omni ex parte evanida seu pallida antequam fuit per me aquâ gallarum delinita* (UCA UC:AR2/MS1/10, 31). The original deed now bears the reference UCA UC:S12/1D/1.

them; but when he came to several ill mark'd, he gave them in the Order he found them ... without the least Reference the one to the other'.[44]

This paper aims only to be a case study of four Colleges, but it is necessary here to give some consideration to Twyne's activities in the University Archives. In 1635, he prepared a 'Repertorium', or catalogue, of them. As at St. John's and Magdalen, each document is listed summarily in a mixture of Latin and English. Documents are arranged in boxes - called Pyxides - and sometimes are grouped within boxes into bundles called fascicula. It is clear where Smith learned his technical vocabulary, and some of his craft.[45]

Nevertheless, as Smith had noted, Twyne could be a little cavalier: although he assembles many documents in logical order, such as documents relating to University privileges or University properties, some of his sequences of documents are every bit as chaotic as those in Magdalen or Queen's. Sometimes the contents of individual boxes are muddled, including both letters patent and leases. Smith did not confine his criticism of Twyne to his history of University College: in 1699 Smith examined closely a copy of Twyne's catalogue in the University Archives, annotating it freely, and occasionally rapping his predecessor on the knuckles, as when he observed of one of Twyne's pyxides 'Note that the charters in this Box are not placed according to the order of time; nor are those that relate to the same tenements put together, but all in confusion'.[46]

Smith also adopts a somewhat different attitude towards the purpose of his work from his predecessors. The cataloguers at St. John's and Magdalen clearly intended their lists for internal administrative purposes. Twyne has something of that spirit in him too: his post was created to provide the University with ready access to documents

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[44] Smith, *Annals*, xxii.

[45] Twyne's catalogue is Oxford University Archives [OUA] NEP/supra/33. Twyne also catalogued the archives of Corpus Christi College in the late 1620s in a similar way to the University Archives. The sophistication of the result was far in advance of the contemporary catalogues so far discussed, and prefigures Smith's methods (see Woolgar 'Two Oxford Archives', 264–71). However, whereas Smith clearly knew and learned from Twyne's catalogue of the University Archives, there is no evidence that he ever examined his work at Corpus. Twyne's role as an archival pioneer in Oxford awaits further examination.

[46] The copy is OUA NEP/supra/54. Smith identifies himself on p. 46, and rebukes Twyne on p. 47.

which confirmed its privileges, and he took a leading role in drafting the Laudian Statutes of 1636.

William Smith certainly had an administrative aim in his cataloguing at University College — it would be much easier to find something there after he had finished — but his volumes of transcripts suggest a deeper antiquarian interest. For all that he did leave a summary list of the archives behind him when he left Oxford, he took his volumes of transcripts away with him. He clearly used them when writing his history, but appears not to have considered giving them to the College. In the end, they were bought by the College from his descendants in 1743 for £21. It was money well spent.[47]

The seventeenth century catalogue served St. John's for a century, and no new documents were added to it until the 1740s. On 31 March 1740 the Governing Body ordered the muniments to be removed from the room in the Tower where they were kept so that a stone arch could be built there to provide them with better security. In the meantime a new catalogue was to be made. Almost two years later on 27 March 1742 the Governing Body ordered that twenty guineas be paid to Hawley Bishop and Thomas Shute for 'revising and putting into order the writings belonging to the College' and another five guineas for writing a Repetory of the same.[48] Two years later two guineas was given to David Horne, a Commoner, for writing a catalogue of the muniments. Horne had been elected Sexton earlier that year, so it is likely he was simply making a fair copy of Bishop and Shute's work.[49] Bishop was a Londoner, and entered the College in 1720. Shute came from Bristol two years later. By 1740 both were senior fellows and were in Holy Orders. It is difficult to reconstruct their activity in the archive accurately, as in just two years, they compiled three new catalogues.

It is clear, though, that they started by making notes in the seventeenth century catalogue, stating that a document was missing or that one was 'so destroy'd as not to be legible',[50] but their principal work on this catalogue was to add summaries of

[47] Correspondence on the purchase of Smith's volumes is at UCA UC:AR2/C1/1–2.
[48] SJCA ADM I.A.7, fols. 108, 134.
[49] SJCA ACC I.A.97, 46. See SJCA ADM I.A.7, 142 for his election as Sexton. In 1742-3 he had been paid two guineas for writing the indexes to the Register (SJCA ACC I.A.96, 46).
[50] For example, SJCA Cat 1, fols. 13v, 23r.

documents that had been created since the catalogue had been completed. Their last entry in this catalogue is dated 1663 and it may be that they decided to start a new catalogue because it became clear that they would run out of space. Bishop and Shute's final catalogue exists in two versions, one entitled 'Repetory',[51] which is probably the book for which they received five guineas, and the other 'Catalogue of the Writings of St. John's College Oxon',[52] which is probably the fair copy written out by Horne. A third catalogue is smaller than the other two and is clearly their rough copy, used in the compilation of the other two.[53]

They list the whole archive up to 1733, and why they end there, seven years before they began their survey of the archive, is not entirely clear, but beyond adding new documents they do little that was not already in the seventeenth century system. The documents are still kept in 'the Charlbury box' or 'a drawer marked Fyfield', and they continue to number documents in each of these unnumbered boxes and drawers. Bishop and Shute have failed to grasp the concept of unique references used by Twyne and Smith.

Their one innovation is to add new sorts of documents to the catalogue. The first catalogue had been concerned almost entirely with the Foundation and the estates, that is title documents as specified in the Statutes. Yet, Bishop and Shute include papers relating to Benefactions, pedigrees submitted by Founder's Kin Fellows, and Visitor's Letters, among others. It is instructive to note that the seventeenth century author called his book a 'Catalogue of Evidences', while Bishop and Shute compiled a 'Catalogue of Writings'. But the summaries of the new documents were just as perfunctory as the earlier work. They were simply updating the catalogue, and it remained nothing more than a means of facilitating the College's administration.

However, within a few years of the completion of their Repetory another Fellow was revising their work, and this time there would be significant changes. William Derham was the son of a Canon of Windsor, and, like Bishop before him, a Merchant Taylor's Scholar. He had served in most of the senior College offices, as well as being

[51] SJCA Cat 4.
[52] SCJA Cat 3.
[53] SJCA Cat 2.

Whyte's Professor of Moral Philosophy, before being elected President of the College in 1748, a position which he held until his death in 1757. The great antiquary H.E. Salter remarked in the VCH that Derham 'has enriched all the college registers with annotations which are legible, accurate, and useful.'[54] This is true, but it understates the importance of Derham's work in the archives.

First, he looked at all the documents again, annotating them with short titles to make it easier to locate them. Bishop and Shute had merely copied out the seventeenth century description of all the early documents, but Derham re-wrote the entire catalogue, using Horne's beautiful work as a rough copy for his own catalogue, ruining it with his scribbles. His new entries are a little fuller than those composed by his predecessors.

More importantly, he is the first in this study to move away from a location based system of arrangement. An hierarchical system had been implicit in the St. John's archive since the seventeenth century, with each box or drawer containing the papers of a single estate. While Smith at University College had developed a system with three hierarchical levels, what might today be called fonds, series and item, Derham retained just two: fonds and item. Like Smith, and for the first time at St John's, Derham gave each of the fonds a unique number. Thus, Fyfield was II; Charlbury was VI; Elections of Presidents and Scholars was LIII. This is a crucial development, for although Smith numbered all his boxes at University College, and ensured that relevant documents were stored together, he did not conceive of each fonds as discrete; his numbering was based on location, not concept. For Smith, one box could hold two different fonds, which would therefore share the same number. Alternatively, one fonds might be split between two boxes and therefore have two different numbers, like the medieval accounts rolls.[55] In Derham's system each fonds had just one number, and each number applied to just that one fonds. For the first time in any of these four colleges it was possible to separate an intellectual system of arrangement from the physical location of the documents. This, of course, is a much more flexible system that preserves more effectively the provenance of the documents, and has the same basic premise as modern standards such as ISAD(G).

[54] Salter, 'St John's College', 257.
[55] See above, p. ???.

It seems clear that Derham was originally motivated by administrative aims. He created a new catalogue along similar lines to that of Bishop and Shute, giving a short summary of each document, which was obviously intended as a finding aid.[56] But Derham was an antiquarian too, and like Smith, one interested in his college, so he went further. He compiled another catalogue consisting of eleven octavo books which described the records in greater detail, even providing full transcripts on occasion.[57] For example, in the summary catalogue he described one document simply as 'George Palyn's Benefaction AD 1610'. In the octavo catalogue he writes of the same document 'George Palyn, Citizen of London & Girdler. His Bequest to the College in the disposal of which he says he was partly directed by Sir William Paddy – Extracted from his Last Will & Testament. He gives £300 to purchase Lands etc in Fee-simple', and continues for another three and a half pages.[58] Derham went even further by compiling another ten little books on the College estates, which noted every reference to that estate from the College Registers and the Manorial Court Books.[59] He also compiled indexes to the Registers and the Statutes, and made extracts from both.

William Derham was therefore cataloguing the archives as a means of making them more accessible to the College administrators, and to satisfy his own antiquarian interests. It is quite possible that it was his interest in the College archive as a source for College history which enabled him to make the step away from a location based, and towards an intellectual system of arrangement, that gave the records more context than in any of the other three colleges thus far.

It is impossible to be sure exactly what state the Queen's archives were in when Edward Rowe Mores entered the College in 1746. An eccentric character, he was not only learned – a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries compiling essays on Aelfric, the nobility under Edward I, the history of Berkshire, and more – but he was also the founding Director of the Society for Equitable Assurances, what is now Equitable Life, where he apparently coined the term 'actuary'.[60]

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[56] SJCA Cat 5.
[57] SJCA Derham transcripts.
[58] SJCA Cat 5, 79, SJCA Derham transcripts III-IX, 186-9.
[59] SJCA Derham copyhold.
[60] The original *DNB* revels in his eccentricities more than the *ODNB*.

Amongst Mores's interests was the history of his college, and with this in mind he worked through the College Archive. His calendar consists of five small books, each filled with his tiny, meticulous script.[61] He starts with a section entitled 'Royal and other letters concerning the College', followed by one called 'Pertaining to the Founder, Provosts and other scholars of The Queen's College.'[62] Then he lists all of the estate records, dividing them first by County, then by estate, and within each estate either by property if a large estate, or simply chronologically. Then follow maps and books in the archives, including the accounts, the ledger books, registers and other miscellaneous books, including 'Dr Langbaines essay towards a catalogue of the muniments of Godshouse' discussed above.[63] It is concluded by a long list of documents with no obvious link to the College. It is an arrangement more reminiscent of Smith than Derham.

Six further books exist in the Bodleian which Mores filled with notes of College history, including excerpts from the annual accounts and the entrance register, and such diverse material as 'The just and necessary apoligie of Henrie Airay touching his suite in law for the rectorie of Charlton' and 'The inscription upon the plate given to the College by several gentlemen commoners since 1646'.[64] This antiquarian interest in College history is also apparent in the catalogue of the archives. He transcribes in full some of the most important papers, and gives detailed summaries of the rest. He is even prepared to add a commentary of his own, adding such things as 'NB. by these conveyances are passed to Danvers three lands lying in Blindwell field'.[65] The calendar is littered with family trees and drawings of seals.

But these are not just a series of antiquarian notes taken from the Archive. In one place he describes in great detail a record of ordination. This might well be an antiquarian's work, but it is followed by an entry stating 'A copy of the same on paper much torn'. On another occasion he listed 'Chirographs of a fine but rotten & illegible'. Why include these if not compiling a definitive catalogue? He also makes

[61] QCA Mores.
[62] *Letterae regiae et aliquae ad ipsum spectant collegium* and *Ad fundatorem praepositos et alios collegii Reginenses scholares spectantes*. Mores, i.
[63] QCA Mores, v, 411; see p. ??.
[64] Bodleian Library MS Gough Oxford 12-17.
[65] QCA Mores, ii, 143.

some notes which suggest that he is carrying out some sort of arrangement. In one place he notes that 'this must come before the conveyance to Doyle as it seems by the interrogatories that that conveyance was made by reason of this suit'. In another place he states that the '60s rent in p.188 must come in here'. There are even curious notes like, 'Let Kelmescote come next. See it in p.257', which is probably an instruction for making another copy. It is not clear whether Mores is physically re-arranging the records. He makes the occasional note like, 'I tied this up in the preceding bundle' which could be a bundle that he created, or one that already existed.[66] At any rate, it seems that a system of boxes and bundles was in use, a system familiar from Twyne and Smith.

But why did Mores compile this catalogue? Though a member of the College, he was not a Fellow and was never involved in any administrative capacity, and his catalogue would not be easy to use, for he never numbered any of the documents. On the rare occasion when a reference was written on the document itself, it was done after his death and merely gave a page number to his calendar. In the nineteenth century references were assigned to each section, running from A to Z, and then 2A to 2Z and so on; and some of the individual documents were numbered, but still these numbers were not written on the documents themselves.

Mores certainly calendared the archive, and calendared it as well as anyone else in the four colleges. But his arrangement is inferior to the other eighteenth century catalogues, for he has neither fully grasped the hierarchical system that, Smith used at University, though there are hints of it, nor the conceptual move away from location-based arrangement that Derham was successfully employing at St. John's. Mores's purely antiquarian motives blinded him to the usefulness of creating a complete hierarchical system.

The eighteenth century therefore emerges from this study as the period in which the first modern systems of archival arrangement appear. The archivists, for want of a better of term, were aware of both the administrative and historical importance of their collections and, perhaps because they were now aware of the documents as

[66] QCA Mores, i, 73, ii, 99, 102, 114, 125, 193.

historical, as well as legal, records they began to organize them in such a way to preserve their provenance and context. Both Derham and Smith were aware of the importance of hierarchical systems and would not have found ISAD(G) too alien. Yet by the end of the century there was danger too, and Mores, whose catalogue is without any explicit hierarchical structure, gives the first hint of the destructive antiquarians who appeared in the nineteenth century.

At Magdalen little had happened since the heroic, if chaotic, efforts of William Langton and his team, save that, from time to time, a few extra deeds were inserted in the relevant boxes, and the catalogue was amended accordingly. Apart from a stocktaking of the deeds in 1779, when the 1610s catalogue was amended to note which deeds were missing, nothing more was done, and anyone wishing to use the Magdalen archives had only this old catalogue for the title deeds, and nothing at all for remaining documents.

In the early 1860s Magdalen decided to do something. The Governing Body minutes for 6 November 1863 record the creation of a committee 'to consider the state of the Muniment Tower, with power to call in Mr. Macray to assist them in arranging the documents', and those for 12 May 1864 record 'That the Deeds &c in the Muniment room be inventoried & put in order according to Mr. Macray's suggestion'.[67]

'Mr Macray' was William Dunn Macray, one of those somewhat hyperactive Victorians whose energy leaves later generations panting in their wake.[68] Having attended Magdalen College School, Macray went to work as an assistant at the Bodleian in 1840 aged fourteen, and remained there for the next sixty-five years. In addition, he matriculated at Magdalen in 1844, sang in the Chapel Choir as a clerk, married and had seven children, was appointed to a College living near Witney, was elected a Research Fellow of Magdalen, and lived until he was ninety. He also compiled an eight-volume biographical register of the Fellows of Magdalen which remains a vital contribution to the historiography of that College. Macray's work on the title deeds of Magdalen was therefore a piece of spare-time activity carried out after hours, taking him fourteen years to complete.

[67] MCA CMM/1/5, fols. 77r, 81v.
[68] More can be found on Macray's career in *ODNB*.

Macray aimed to supersede the 1610s catalogue with something more detailed and usable. First, he went through the deeds in their Jacobean order, producing detailed and excellent calendars of each one on individual slips of paper. Every person or place mentioned was listed; the contents of the deed were summarised in full, with important or unusual passages quoted from the original where necessary; the seals were described; and Macray attempted to date every document.

When Macray had completed listing the contents of a box, he then rearranged and bound up his slips into one chronological sequence, as best he could. This was more problematic: each box contains deeds relating to one manor or parish, but, as with the Newcastle deeds at University College, they usually contain different deeds relating to different properties, deeds relating to a previous owner's acquisition and administration of the estate, and, finally, deeds relating to the acquisition of the estate by William Waynflete or the College. William Smith would have taken great pleasure in 'sever[ing] them into so many Heaps', so that the estate's administrative history could have been laid bare. Macray, however, by listing all the deeds of a parish or manor in one chronological sequence, and by admitting no structure beyond a fonds and an item, has blown all such subtleties away.

So what was Macray trying to achieve? In a report submitted to the College in 1868, he writes: 'Already, considerable interest has been awakened by what has been done, and advantage derived from it by antiquaries … Mr. Gairdner, a well-known historical Editor, who is at work on a new edition of the Paston Papers, looks forward to gaining some new information from the examination of some of Sir John Fastolf's deeds'.[69] Another glimpse into Macray's mind comes from a book published soon after he completed his great task. Titled *Notes from the Muniments of St. Mary Magdalen College Oxford*, it is a short anthology of interesting things in the deeds: lists of names of people; transcriptions of some documents; indexes of unusual terms; and so on. After Macray's mountainous labour on the deeds, this is a mere archival mouse. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that Macray wanted to make the archives of Magdalen more accessible to scholars, and unlike the eighteenth-century antiquarians, he wanted

[69] MCA EP/232/4.

his work made available outside the college. He tried to persuade Magdalen to publish the whole of his catalogue, but the College was not interested.

Macray was almost too well attuned to what he thought the scholarly needs of his own day were, so that he arranged the Magdalen deeds in an order which he thought might be useful to scholars to one in preference to one which reflected their administrative history. Of course, Macray was not alone in adopting such a methodology. A similar tale can be told from University College. In the 1920s, the Surtees Society published a volume which included calendars of all the pre-1510 Newcastle deeds in the College's archives — in theory an excellent project.[70] However, the editor disregarded all Smith's painstaking attempts to tease out the history of each property in the estate, and published all the deeds in one complete chronological sequence.

Macray included very few uncatalogued documents in his volumes, apart from the two small chests of miscellaneous items possibly set aside by Langton and his team, which he did sort and calendar. Yet there remained the College's accounts, the many documents relating to the administration of its estates, and some personal papers. Macray himself was aware of this problem. In 1878, he wrote 'there remains still untouched in the Muniment Room the Chest containing the Bursars Rolls. These, to perfect the good work, should be cleaned, dated, numbered, and put in order'.[71] The College did not see fit to perfect it.

Arguably, therefore, although Macray's cataloguing skills at item level are beyond reproach, his archival arrangement, and his feeling for what should be catalogued, mark something of a regression from the achievements made by the likes of Smith and Derham.

Fifty years after Macray completed his catalogue, another scholar turned his attention to the archives of three of these colleges. His name was Noel Denholm-Young. A Fellow of Magdalen from 1931–46, and arguably the most eminent scholar to catalogue any of these four College archives, he would in later years make a major contribution to the study of archives by helping to found the archives course at

[70] Oliver (ed.), *Early Deeds*.
[71] MCA MS 825.

Bangor University. Unfortunately, his archival activities at Oxford in the 1930s do him little credit, especially when compared with his predecessors.

Denholm-Young's most significant contribution at Magdalen was to have Macray's catalogue typed up and several copies made, to make it more accessible. However, when he did some cataloguing of his own, the results were less happy. He seems to have enjoyed browsing through the uncatalogued archives, picking out documents which appeared interesting. He numbered up these documents in one sequence of running numbers which were assigned as he found them, with no thought of their provenance or original order. The result was calamitous. All the documents thus extracted have been deprived of their provenance, their original context is completely lost, and there is no sense of any hierarchical structure. It is good to have any unknown documents listed; but it is unfortunate that they were valued excessively for their individual worth.

The arrangement Denholm-Young carried out for Queen's sheds more light on the concepts behind his cataloguing. He divided his catalogue into two parts: the medieval which he regarded as being of interest only to historians, and the modern which was principally administrative.[72] He even went so as far to suggest that the latter 'hardly comes within the province of an archivist'.[73] To Denholm-Young the archivist was an historian and an antiquarian, and certainly not an administrator.

And so, with regard to 'modern records' Denholm-Young could be destructive. In the early 1930s he reported to the Governing Body of Queen's that 'a big step towards clearing up the muniment room could be made by destroying those expired leases & counterparts of leases, of which copies exist in the lease books.' He had already proposed this at St. John's, who had followed his advice.[74] Queen's, however, decided not to burn them because 'some Americans or others might care to have them'. They were eventually sold to a rare books dealer, who paid £15 for them. In 1939 the College tried to buy them back, and although the dealer no longer had them, he

[72] There are copies in the Bodleian and The Queen's College Library.
[73] QCA FA1. Denholm-Young's attitude to what constituted an archive - and his attitude to older title deeds - may have been influenced by the changes in Land Law enacted in the mid-1920s, which served to reduce the importance of such documents.
[74] QCA FA1. He seems to have done little else at St. John's, but copy Derham's catalogue into a new ledger.

provided replacements. Despite having nothing to do with College history, these deeds were perfectly adequate for the College's requirements: the creation of lamp shades.[75]

Denholm-Young had other radical ideas for College archives. In 1930, he successfully persuaded Queen's to deposit their medieval records with the Bodleian, where they remain today, claiming that they would be more accessible to searchers there.[76] In 1933, he put the same proposal before Magdalen.[77] The Fellows agreed to consider the deposit, but later would not approve the expenditure needed for reboxing the records, and the proposal was quietly forgotten. There remains one last, and disturbing, aspect to the Magdalen project: no mention was made anywhere of the fate of the medieval boxes and cupboards in the Muniment Room where the deeds had been stored for the last four centuries. This sums up perfectly the attitude exhibited by Denholm-Young's generation towards sacrificing context in their adoration of the content of the individual document – an attitude not wholly extinct today.

However, Denholm-Young's approach was already coming in for criticism. One Fellow of Magdalen who opposed moving the archives was Bruce McFarlane, the legendary medievalist. In a letter to a friend he wrote: 'I love a row. I am planning a lovely new one over the college archives — it hasn't a chance of succeeding but I shall have my fun.' More seriously he planned to propose 'that the College should consult Hilary Jenkinson of the Record Office — he is a personal friend of the President & the chief authority on archive administration in England. I am pretty certain he will be down on the Bodleian proposal, & that will add to the fun'.[78]

McFarlane's words reveal a greater sensitivity for archival matters than Denholm-Young, because of his awareness of the work of Sir Hilary Jenkinson. For the first edition of Jenkinson's seminal work, the *Manual of Archive Administration*, had been

[75] QCA FA1, FA3. Some Americans did indeed eventually acquire the deeds. They are now part of University of Kansas, Kenneth Spencer Library, MS239.
[76] QCA FA1. The deeds are now Bodleian MS DD Queen's Deeds.
[77] Denholm-Young's report is in MCA CS/32, and it was discussed at the College Meeting of 7 December 1933 (MCA CMM/1/10, 149).
[78] MCA MC:P27/C1/47.

published back in 1922.[79] That 1922 edition contained passages on the duties of an archivist which were preserved largely unchanged in those later editions which are usually consulted today. There are three particular themes which should be noted. First, Jenkinson urged the importance of respecting original order and provenance where possible: 'Separation', he wrote, 'for one reason or another of documents that have been preserved together is so common an error and so fatal'.[80] Secondly, Jenkinson's *Manual* assumes that the archivist will work as much with modern as ancient records — indeed, the Manual was actually commissioned in the first instance as a guide for appraising records relating to the First World War. Finally, and most importantly, Jenkinson wrote 'The Archivist is not and ought not be an Historian'.[81] This may seem a little hypocritical, for Jenkinson was guilty of some sterling works of historical scholarship himself. However, he then explains himself further: 'Most of the bad and dangerous work done in the past may be traced to external enthusiasms and resulting in a failure on the part of the Archivist to treat the Archives as a special subject'.[82] The problem, as Jenkinson saw it, was that a historian working as an archivist is too vulnerable to his own fads of the moment for the good of seeing the collection dispassionately.

Unfortunately, Denholm-Young's work at Magdalen, Queen's and St. John's, when judged by the standards of a book which he could have read for himself, emerges as bad and dangerous. In fact, the archivists in this survey who are closest in spirit to Jenkinson, and who meet his theoretical demands the best, are actually Smith and Derham back in the eighteenth century. It is a rather melancholy thought that, after their achievements, almost all the work carried out in these four Colleges in the intervening years had shown a regression in archival practice.

There is, however, one curious postscript to Denholm-Young's activities at Magdalen. A few years after Denholm-Young's election as a Fellow, Oxfordshire County Council created a Record Office, and appointed as its first County Archivist Hugh Walton, who had learnt his craft from a brief period at Essex Record Office. Walton

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[79] Jenkinson, *Manual*. In spite of the reverence accorded Jenkinson's work, many ideas put forward in it had already been in print for several years in the works of his PRO colleagues Charles Crump, Hubert Hall and Charles Johnson (see Proctor, 'Life before Jenkinson').
[80] Jenkinson, *Manual*, 67.
[81] Jenkinson, *Manual*, 106.
[82] Jenkinson, *Manual*, 106–7.

was invited by Denholm-Young to list all the title deeds in the Bursary offices which related mainly to College properties acquired since the seventeenth century.[83] Walton did this work out of hours and spent three years on it. It is significant that Denholm-Young regarded records like this as beneath the dignity of an archivist as he defined it, whereas Hugh Walton, one of the first of that new breed of professional archivists who took their lead from the likes of Hilary Jenkinson, had no such qualms. Walton's approach, curiously close to that of Langton and his team over three centuries previously, was to produce a summary list of every item in every box, but with no attempt made to sort them out any further. Thus, although all the deeds relating to a particular property may be listed together, they are — like the lists compiled by Langton and other early cataloguers in Oxford — in a completely random order. Nevertheless, Walton's caution is infinitely preferable to the interventionist ways of Denholm-Young, for he respected the administrative provenance of the documents as he found them.

Since Jenkinson's day, archival theorists have continued to emphasise the importance of approaching an archive collection through an administrator's eyes first and foremost — much as Hugh Walton did — and of attempting to recover all the information one can about a document's provenance and original context. Nevertheless, it can be reasonably argued that the good archivist still needs to also have an antiquarian spirit. In the listing of archives, one ought to consider how best to make these documents comprehensible to the searcher and how to write catalogues which will help guide people to the material they require. In short, if the archivists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries thought of archives as the province of administrators, and those of the nineteenth and early twentieth thought of them as the province of the antiquarian, those of the twenty-first — and indeed the eighteenth — realise that they ought to be the province of both.

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[83] Evidence from the preface to Walton's catalogue, conversations between Walton and Robin Darwall-Smith, and MCA CMR/4/16 (report by Denholm-Young dated 9 June 1936 on Walton's work).

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