

# The Theology Library of UCLouvain: From Leuven to Louvain-la-Neuve (1970–2020)

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No doubt about it, paradise is just one immense library

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In 1968, the decision was made to divide the University of Louvain into two linguistic sections:<sup>1</sup> the Dutch-speaking ‘Katholieke Universiteit Leuven’ (known as KULeuven today), which remained in Leuven, and the French-speaking ‘Université catholique de Louvain’ (known as UCLouvain today), which was gradually moved to a site in Ottignies between 1972 and 1979.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, reflections carried out on the evolution of the University in the wake of May 1968 led authorities from both of the two new universities to favour a decentralised model of faculty libraries. Departing from the old idea of a Central Library, it was felt that faculty libraries would guarantee greater user proximity and therefore usage.<sup>3</sup> Opting for decentralisation was also essential

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- 1 Willy Jonckheere and Herman Todts, *Leuven Vlaams: Splittingsgeschiedenis van de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1979), and Christian Laporte, *L'affaire de Louvain: 1960–1968*, Collection pol-his: Politique et histoire (Brussels: De Boeck Université, 1999).
  - 2 Michel Woitrin, *Louvain-la-Neuve. Louvain-en-Woluwe: Le grand dessein* (Paris and Gembloux: Duculot, 1987). Let us recall that the site of Louvain-en-Woluwe where the Faculty of Medicine was inaugurated in 1974 and the Cliniques universitaires Saint-Luc/St. Luc University Hospital in 1976, at the outset had nothing to do with the crisis of the 1960's: construction of a new francophone university hospital had been programmed since 1965 to ensure it a francophone patient base.
  - 3 On the Theology Library of KULeuven since 1968, see Mathijs Lamberigts and Leo Kenis, “De Maurits Sabbebibliotheek van de Faculteit Godgeleerdheid,” in *Omnia autem probate, quod bonum est tenete: Opstellen aangeboden aan Etienne D'hondt*, ed. Mathijs Lamberigts and Leo Kenis (Leuven: Maurits Sabbebibliotheek – Peeters, 2010), 1–20; Chris Coppens, Mark Derez, and Jan Roegiers, *Leuven University Library: Sapientia aedificavit sibi domum* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), “VI. The Library after the Partition 1970–2000,” 359–386, and “VII.

on the French-speaking side for practical reasons: having physically moved location, they wished to guarantee access to faculty-related libraries as of the students' arrival on their new site!<sup>4</sup>

After a short historical presentation, we will endeavour to concisely present the powerful tool all potential users henceforth have at their disposal. We will end with some prospective considerations.

## 1 Historical Journey

### 1.1 *A Louvainist Gestation (1968–1975)*

Over a decade had passed between the decision to split in 1968 and the French-speaking section's final departure from Leuven in August 1979. However, under the leadership of its Dean, Philippe Delhaye,<sup>5</sup> the French-speaking Faculty of Theology were prepared for a prompt departure: whilst some on the Flemish side had at the outset speculated about maintaining a single Faculty of Theology, theologians on the French-speaking side intended to stand together with the rest of their University and leave Leuven. The fate of the Library had to be considered from the very beginning, even before the principles of division between the two universities were agreed upon and, on the governmental side, even before new legal frameworks were adopted. It was from that same position – shared by other officials and the French-speaking authorities involved – that a documentary centre was established on Redingenstraat (Redingen Street) in Leuven in September 1969, in the Sisters of Charity's former school building (recently acquired by the then still-united University). Very soon afterwards, on November 25th of that same year it

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The Leuven Library Landscape after 1970," 425–470, among which "A Profession of Faith," 439–444 (on the Theology Library).

4 On the history of the libraries of UCLouvain since 1968, see Jean Germain, "Les Bibliothèques de l'UCL: Une histoire de livres ou une histoire de personnes?," in *Travailler à l'Université: Histoire et actualité des personnels de l'Université de Louvain (1425–2005)*. *Chronique de l'Université de Louvain publiée à l'occasion de l'exposition au Forum des Halles, à Louvain-la-Neuve, du 14 au 23 février 2006*, ed. F. Hiraux, Publications des Archives de l'Université catholique de Louvain 12 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia Bruylant, 2006), 63–96. Shortened version Jean Germain and Charles-Henri Nyns, "Les bibliothèques de l'UCL," *Lectures: La revue des bibliothèques* 26 (2007): 52–56 (no. 151).

5 Philippe Delhaye (1912–1990), priest of the diocese of Namur (1937), professor of Moral Theology at Louvain (1966–1982), was Dean of the Faculty of Theology from 1968 to 1972, at a key moment of its history. See Éric Gaziaux, "Philippe Delhaye," *Nouvelle biographie nationale*, vol. 10 (Brussels: Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 2010), 124–127.

acquired a powerful tool for action: the Cerfaux-Lefort Centre (CCL), named after two eminent Walloon Louvain professors, Lucien Cerfaux<sup>6</sup> and Louis-Theophilus Lefort.<sup>7</sup> A non-profit organisation, the CCL had been put in charge of the reconstitution of libraries and archive holdings by the University.<sup>8</sup> Recognised as a 'university service' in the official constitution of the Université catholique de Louvain on July 1st 1970, the Centre could then begin its work. Two experienced cataloguers were sent from the Central Library, settling in on 'Redingenstraat': index cards and thousands of volumes were then conveyed to the respective libraries of five Faculties and Institutes. Later, once the sharing agreements relating to the old Central Library were signed in March 1971, the CCL extended the scope of its activities to all of the libraries within the two universities, but that's another story.<sup>9</sup>

Work began on the Faculty of Theology, when the Library of the Institute of Higher Learning of Religious Studies (the ISSR), was created by Prof. Albert Houssiau (himself future Bishop of Liège from 1986 to 2001). The ISSR was a general library, intended for use by future secondary school teachers. Logistics were at the beginning managed by the CCL's personnel, alongside Sr. Marie-André Houdart, a Benedictine of the Saint Gertrude Abbey, who was hired to assist Prof. Houssiau in October 1970.<sup>10</sup> Thirteen small, specialised

6 On Lucien Cerfaux (1883–1968), priest of the diocese of Tournai, Doctor in philosophy (1903) and in theology (1910) at the Gregorian University in Rome, trained in exegesis at the Pontifical Biblical Institute (1910–1911), brilliant professor of Hellenistic culture (1928), and then of New Testament exegesis (1930) at Louvain, see especially Joseph Coppens, "Cerfaux (Lucien-Jean-Joseph)," *Biographie nationale*, vol. 41 (Brussels: Bruylant, 1979), 95–110.

7 On Louis-Théophile Lefort (1879–1959), priest of the diocese of Namur (1901), Doctor in classical philology of Louvain (1905), where he was appointed lecturer (1906), and then professor (1908), eminent Coptologist specialising in the history of Pachomian monasticism, see especially Gérard Garitte, "Lefort (Louis-Théophile)," in *Biographie nationale*, vol. 40 (Brussels: Bruylant, 1978), 615–618.

8 Julien Ries, *Au service des bibliothèques de Louvain-la-Neuve: Le Centre Cerfaux-Lefort (a.s.b.l.)* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre Cerfaux-Lefort, 1972). The signatories are Philippe Delhay, Dean of the Faculty of Theology; Msgr. Henri Wagnon, Dean of the International Faculty of Canon Law; Jacques Ryckmans, President of the Orientalist Institute; professors Albert Houssiau, President of the Higher Institute of Religious Studies, Fernand van Steenberghen, President of the Interfaculty Institute of Medieval Studies, Gérard Garitte, Director of the orientalist journal *Le Muséon*, and Julien Ries, named administrator of the association. This explains that the latter also being a parish priest of Suarlée, the Centre was headquartered there.

9 In 1982, the Centre had redistributed 1,200,000 volumes. Julien Ries, "Au service des bibliothèques de l'UCL," *Louvain* 1 (1982) no. 4 (special issue *Les bibliothèques à l'UCL*).

10 Sr. Marie-André Houdart, Benedictine of the Saint Gertrude Abbey, initially in Leuven, and moved to Louvain-la-Neuve in 1978, was hired as a librarian at the Higher Institute of

seminar libraries began to be developed around the professors involved, each time thanks to the contributions in books via the CCL. Coordination of 'Redingenstraat' was very soon entrusted to a single head, Abbot Jean Lafontaine, who would play an important role in the world of 'Redingenstraat'.<sup>11</sup> Hired on 1st April 1970 as a part-time assistant in orientalism, Lafontaine dealt with the orientalist library while preparing his doctorate and quickly obtained a complementary part-time position in service to Msgr. Delhaye, the Dean.

### 1.2 *A Premature Birth (1975–1981)*

Eager to settle into Louvain-la-Neuve, as we have seen, the theologians moved to Louvain-la-Neuve in summer 1974, setting up shop in provisional buildings of the Place Croix du Sud initially intended for the Faculty of Agronomy. The Library followed in summer 1975, subsequently reorganising itself into a reinforced common library, a library of religious study and six seminar libraries, which would remain, *grosso modo*, the organisational base.<sup>12</sup> As of 1st October 1974, Jean-François Gilmont was named part-time library administrator (spending the rest of his time on his academic activities), with the mission of organising the transfer to Louvain-la-Neuve. Like many of his librarian colleagues of the time, he was a historian of the Reformation and the book.<sup>13</sup> Assisted by the aforementioned Sr. Marie-André Houdart, at first administrator of the undergraduate studies section, they coordinated this early work.

Among them was to be found a young colleague of Gilmont with a promising future: Tom Osborne, working from 1978 to 1984, who obtained his doctorate in Theology in 1981 and then became professor of Biblical Studies at the

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Religious Studies in October 1970, then working at the Theology Library until her retirement in 1993; see "Sœur Marie-André Houdart," *Quoi de 9? Gazette BGS.H: Bulletin mensuel d'information de la Bibliothèque générale et de sciences humaines* 11 (October 9, 1993): 1. She died October 25, 2018 at Ermeton-sur-Biert, where she had moved in 2006.

11 The Abbé Guy Lafontaine received the title of doctor in philology and oriental history on December 17, 1973. In 1982, he was named professor of Coptic and of Armenian. On Jean Lafontaine (1938–2004), see especially Sophie Meunier, "Le temple des Muses de l'orientalisme louvaniste: Petite histoire de la constitution de la bibliothèque orientaliste de l'Université catholique de Louvain," in *Les études orientales à l'Université de Louvain depuis 1834: Hommes et réalisations*, ed. Luc Courtois, *Histoire* 12 (Brussels: Éditions Safran, 2021), 441–462, *passim*.

12 See Geneviève Bricoult, "Jean-François Gilmont: La passion du livre," *Quoi de 9? La Gazette de BGS.H. Gazette d'information du personnel* 49 (1999): 1–2.

13 On Jean-François Gilmont (1934–2020), see Bricoult, "Jean-François Gilmont." See also Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "In memoriam Jean-François Gilmont (1934–2020)," *Revue théologique de Louvain* 52 (2021): 151–153; Luc Courtois, "Décès," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 116 (2021): 1107–1108.

Luxembourg Seminary, as well as being administrator of its Library.<sup>14</sup> Mention must also be made of the presence of Viviane Meulemans, who had started working at the Central Library in 1970 under the guidance of Prof. Joseph Ruwet and who, after having worked elsewhere in Louvain-la-Neuve, returned to libraries in 1976, namely to the Boltzmann building, where she was soon joined by Marie-Thérèse Lopepe (1979).<sup>15</sup> Many volunteers also contributed to the development of the Theology Library, among whom we would be remiss not to evoke the figure of Jeanne Buisseret. She started work at the Central Library in 1920, whilst it was undergoing complete reconstitution after the fire of 1914, and then worked at the Spoelbergh Institute until 1928, then joining the new Library – built thanks to American generosity – on the Place du Peuple (today Ladeuzeplein). As is well known, the Library burnt down again in 1940, and, returning from exodus in France, Jeanne Buisseret joined her colleagues at the American College, where they had already worked on the second restoration of that venerable institution. After her retirement in 1965, she continued to work as a volunteer in Leuven on ‘Redingenstraat’ and then at Louvain-la-Neuve, in the Orientalist Institute, and soon at the Theology Library.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.3 *Almost Home (1981–1989)*<sup>17</sup>

In January 1981, as snowflakes fell, the entire Theology Library left the upper city (the ‘quartier des Sciences’) and moved down to the Grand-Place (beside the social sciences), with a view to permanent installation in a new building, named the Collège Albert Descamps, after that professor of theology and last unitary rector (1962–1969), who had just died in a car accident at the entrance

14 He was in charge of the Diocesan Biblical Service of the Diocese of Luxembourg (1990–2001), coordinator of the sub-region of Southern and Western European (1996–2002), secretary of the Eastern region of the French Catholic Association for Bible Study (ACFEB) (2008–2011) and then general secretary *ad interim* of the Catholic Bible Federation (2011–2014), and professor emeritus in 2016. See the site: Éditions jésuites, [https://www.editions.jesuites.com/fr/1541\\_osborne](https://www.editions.jesuites.com/fr/1541_osborne) [accessed May 20, 2021].

15 Jean Germain and Geneviève Bricoult, *Intervention lors du départ à la pension de Viviane Meulemans*, November 14, 2002 (unpublished).

16 On Jeanne Buisseret (1900–1998), see Jeanne Buisseret, “Un merci qui va droit au cœur,” *Quoi de 9? Gazette BGSB. Bulletin mensuel d’information de la Bibliothèque générale et de sciences humaines* 32 (November 9, 1995): 1; and Geneviève Bricoult, “Jeanne Buisseret nous a quittés,” *APATO-info* 12 (Spring 1998).

17 See Jean Germain, “Entre tradition et modernité: La bibliothèque de la Faculté,” *Bulletin de la Fondation Sedes Sapientiae* 1 (1998): 5–6; id., “Les Bibliothèques de l’UCL: Une histoire de livres ou une histoire de personnes?,” 79–80 on the library of the Faculty of Theology. See also Bricoult, “Jean-François Gilmont,” 1–2.

of Louvain-la-Neuve (on 15th October 1980).<sup>18</sup> The building had initially been designed to accommodate the new General Centre of Documentation (CGD), which had been installed the year before (June–September 1979) in the nearby building, the ‘Collège Érasme’, for use by the Faculty of Arts and its library (BFLT). The CGD housed what remained of the former ‘Bibliothèque Centrale’, the French-speaking part, and the space was not intended to be distributed among the faculties.<sup>19</sup> A few figures that make your head spin: without counting 180,000 volumes which had already been transported in some fifteen trips before June 1979, 120 trucks transporting 23,000 cases of approximately 50 volumes, grouped on 1,800 wood pallets. This move made direct access to the collections of the BFLT possible in the provisional CGD (although books were in silos in the basements and available on order, rather than on the open shelves)! An important detail should be noted: the BFLT does not occupy a space distinct from workspaces (offices, seminar rooms, etc.), as the latter are integrated into the library. The BTEC was thus developed on the same model, and it is a rare privilege, for the fortunate occupants of the Érasme and Descamps buildings, to be able to access all the books without stepping out of their office...

In fact, the initial plan for the transfer had envisaged a Faculty building in the lower city, but budgetary constraints led to re-examining that optimistic idea. Having already attached the Collège Descamps to the Érasme building, the decision was taken to properly connect them and to integrate the Faculty of Theology and its library into it as well. Ceilings were lowered, a fourth level was added, and the various buildings assigned to the Theology Library were distributed respectively on the 1st, 3rd, and 4th floors of Descamps, which was hardly practical, neither for the personnel nor for the readers. The library was, in fact, only consolidated on the two higher floors following successive removals and transformations. But the BTEC and BFLT libraries and the CGD (which had ceased being a ‘library’) were thus joined together in just one space constituting the ‘grouped Libraries’. This was crucial, as it allowed the pooling of

18 See Camille Focant, “Descamps (Albert-Louis-Paul-Fidèle),” in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques* 193–194a (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 515–518.

19 See Roger Aubert, “Partages en cascades,” *Louvain* 1 (1982): 9–23 (special issue *Les bibliothèques à l’UCL*); Jean Germain, “La bibliothèque centrale: entre errances et transhumances,” *Journal des Lettres de Louvain-la-Neuve* 3 (2005): 13–20; Coppens, Derez, and Roegiers, *Leuven University Library*, 359–386. There is no need to go back over the eventful and tragic history of the Central Library before the split, notably the two world wars: Jan Van Impe, *The University Library of Leuven: The Story of a Phoenix* (Leuven: University Press, 2006); Mark Derez and Marika Ceunen, “Louvain: Furore Teutonico Diruta,” in *Villes martyres: Visé, Aerschot, Andenne, Tamines, Dinant, Louvain, Termonde: Belgique, août – septembre 2014*, ed. André Tixhon and Mark Derez (Namur: Presses universitaires de Namur, 2014), 319–395.

the lending service, common to all three libraries. The single access being – as it still is – by the ‘Collège Érasme’, had the knock-on effect of isolating a part of the Faculty of Theology offices located on the first floor, away from the libraries’ space...

#### 1.4 *Short Detour through the ‘General – and Social Sciences – Library’ (1989–2010)*<sup>20</sup>

The constraints of such a rapid transfer (between 1972 and 1979) meant that only the most urgent matters had been dealt with, and dealt with quickly. What was gradually detached from the old central trunk, just like what was created from scratch with a view to gradually establishing the faculty libraries, was organised in a relatively autonomous way, notably in terms of catalogographical standards, classification rules, access cards, photocopies, etc. By force of circumstances, they had transitioned from an entirely centralised system towards an accelerated decentralisation, with the only common service being a general catalogue managed by the CGD, through the integration of the ‘pink’ index cards coming from all the libraries. This was far from satisfactory, especially in the social sciences where research often mobilises works done in various disciplines, including in the positive sciences!

In that context, in April 1989, the grouped Libraries took their first steps towards ‘centralisation’, even if some duplication remained. It was the idea of the vice-chancellor of the time, Pierre Macq,<sup>21</sup> to begin a certain reunification of the libraries, amalgamating the services of the grouped Libraries (CGD, BFLT, BTEC) into a new ‘General – and social sciences – Library’ (BGSH), which would be headed by Jean Germain.<sup>22</sup> One thing led to another, although not without a few twists and turns, and this movement of centring led to the creation, in 2001, of a single framework, ‘the Libraries of the Université catholique de Louvain’ (BIUL), of which Charles-Henri Nyns, director of the Library of exact sciences (BSE) from 1992 to 2000, became the head librarian.<sup>23</sup> But that

20 Germain, “Les Bibliothèques de l’UCL: Une histoire de livres ou une histoire de personnes?,” 79–80 for the Library of the Faculty of Theology (BTEC).

21 On Pierre Macq (1930–2013), physicist, professor (1958) and then dean of the Faculty of Sciences, and finally Rector of the University from 1986–1995, see Marcel Crochet, ed., *Pierre Macq dans son université* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia – l’Harmattan, 2017).

22 On Jean Germain, curator at the Central Library in Leuven (1971–1979) and then of the CGD at Louvain-la-Neuve (1979–1989), and director of BGSH (1989–2009), see the site of the Royal Commission on Toponymy and Dialectology, <<https://www.toponymie-dialectologie.be/fr/jean-germain/>> [accessed May 20, 2021].

23 Charles-Henri Nyns was also the promoter of the BICTEL Project (Electronic theses) and DIAL (Institutional repository of UCLouvain and its partners). Under his direction, the UCLouvain acquired the first Learning Centre in French-speaking Belgium. From 2006

too is another story... Meanwhile, as Jean-François Gilmont had obtained academic leave to work in Geneva on the project of *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, it was Geneviève Bricoult, hired in March 1990 as an associate of Jean Germain, who took over at the head of the theology section.

During the summer of 1990, one of her first missions was to coordinate moving the specialised library of canon law (CANO) from the first to the third floor of Descamps, to make room for the new 'Salle du Conseil' of the Faculty of Theology. Due to lack of space, the missiology section (MISS) remained in the corridor of the first floor, beside the room housing the library of the History of Christianity.

In October 1997, a new basic theology library (THEO) was inaugurated on the third floor: after a serious weeding, it replaced the Library of Religious Sciences (RELI), begun, as we have seen, in 1970 on 'Redingenstraat'.<sup>24</sup> The venerable paper catalogue, which still coexisted with the digital catalogues and data banks, thus definitively yielded its place to a data-processing space allowing easy access to information.

In 2006, the library specialising in canon law left the third floor, moving to the periodicals room on the fourth floor, making room for the Library specialising in religious studies (HIRE).

### 1.5 *Really at Home (2010–)*<sup>25</sup>

The increasingly fast development of electronic resources and virtual information led to a reinforcement of the centralised procedures in the Libraries of the Université catholique de Louvain (BIUL). In that context, the first centralised structure, the 'General – and social sciences – Library' (BGS), lost much of its initial relevance. Also, in 2009, upon the pre-retirement of Jean Germain, it was replaced by two autonomous units, the Theology Library (BTEC) and the Library of Arts (BFLT) directed by Delphine Meurs, assistant director since 1998. At the same time, the management of stacks and the Rare Books Collection, which depended on the BGS, came under the Central Service of Libraries (SCEB)'s management.

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to 2010, He was president of the non-profit organisation, 'Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de la Communauté française de Belgique' (Interuniversity Library of the French-speaking Community of Belgium), again assuring its presidency since 2020 (<<https://uclouvain.be/fr/repertoires/charles-henri.nyns>>).

24 Geneviève Bricoult, "Une nouvelle Bibliothèque théologique de base au service de l'UCL," *Notes: Société théologique de Louvain* 88 (1997): 1.

25 See Geneviève Bricoult, "Du Collège Descamps à la toile, quoi de neuf à la Bibliothèque de théologie?," *Bulletin [de la Fondation Sedes Sapientiae]* 30 (2012): 9–10.



A new and important step also came in 2011–2012: the loan counter of the stacks and the inter-library loan service were brought together in a new service, the BiblioPôle, and were transferred from the third floor to the second floor of Descamps. The specialised libraries of History of Christianity (HECC) and of Missiology (MISS), installed on the first floor in 1989, moved to freed-up space on the third floor, finally achieving the spatial unity of the Theology Library in a coherent whole, on the third and fourth floors of the Collège Descamps.

## 2 The Theology Library Today

Serving the university community of UCLouvain and, more broadly, any member of the public interested in theology, biblical studies and the sciences of religions, the Theology Library focuses on supporting teaching and research in several entities whose history has intersected with its own: the Faculty of Theology (TECO), the Research Institute Religions, Spiritualities, Cultures, Societies (RSCS), the Doctoral School in Theology and Biblical Studies and the Doctoral School in Sciences of Religions (EDOREL). Together with the RSCS Institute, the Faculty of Theology's Library Commission determines management policy for the Theology Library and approves its budgets and accounts. Since 1990, it has been chaired by professors Roger Gryson, Pierre Bogaert, Henri Wattiaux, Éric Gaziaux, and Jean-Marie Auwers.

Having dealt with the formation and state of its current collections, we will now briefly describe the organisation of the library; we will describe the digitalisation of its catalogue, and indicate other services offered, on the heuristic and teaching level, before concluding with a look to the future and potential partnerships and prospects.

### 2.1 *Current Collections*

As we discovered on our historical journey, the initial holdings of the Library were established in 1970, thanks to the transfer to the 'Redingenstraat' centre of books from the Central Library division and then, little by little, the collection expanded with works arriving via the Centre Cerfaux Lefort and other sources.<sup>26</sup> Acquisitions owing to a regular, annual budgetary allocation (and sometimes from extraordinary catch-up budgets intended to compensate for

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26 See especially Germain, "Entre tradition et modernité: La bibliothèque de la Faculté," 5–6.

gaps resulting from the move), plus many external contributions, by legacy or gift, served as a supplement from the outset.<sup>27</sup>

Another not insignificant source of materials came via regular gifts from current professors who, in addition to copies of their own publications, gave the library volumes received for review or in tribute to the author or for which they had no further use, etc. In addition, certain professors, such as Canon Aubert, aware of the importance of their library for research, did not hesitate to contribute generously to the finance of new purchases.<sup>28</sup> To this we can also add increases obtained thanks to exchanges provided by the journals *Revue théologique de Louvain*, *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* and *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, which also regularly offered books received in duplicate. And last but not least, in a fortunate coincidence of circumstances, the Library also inherited holdings from libraries which had evolved in a new direction or which had lost their *raison d'être*. We might recall here the transfer of part of the collections of the Library of the Major Seminary of Malines, in the 1980s (with UCL receiving the works published later than 1800) or more recently, in 2016, the arrival of the library holdings of the International Catechetical and Pastoral Centre *Lumen Vitae* (Brussels),<sup>29</sup> which, when moving to Namur, gave part of its holdings to the Theology Library as well as to the Archives of Belgian French-speaking Catholicism (ARCA).<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the Library also, when finances allowed, made collective repurchases, such as that of the Library of the Missionary Auxiliary Society (SAM) of Brussels. At present, the Theology Library allows direct-access consultation of approximately 90,000 books, as well as 250 collections and 420 titles of printed periodicals.

27 In particular Prof. Roger Aubert (†2009), Prof. Maurice Cheza (†2019), Prof. André de Halleux (†1994), Msgr. Philippe Delhay (†1990), Mrs. Alice Dermience (†2016), Msgr. Albert Descamps (†1980), Prof. Camille Focant, Msgr. Roger Gryson, Msgr. Albert Houssiau, Prof. Joseph Ponthot (†2009), Fr. Bruno Reynders (†1981), Msgr. Jean Leflon (†1979), Msgr. Charles Moeller (†1986), Prof. Maurice Simon (†2016), Canon André Simonet (†1992), Prof. Claude Soetens (†2019), Msgr. Gustave Thils (†2000), Prof. Robert Waelkens (†1980), and Msgr. Henri Wagnon (†1983). See also Bricoult, "Du Collège Descamps à la toile, quoi de neuf à la Bibliothèque de théologie?," 9–10.

28 See also the case of the Foundation *Sedes Sapientiae*, which, more broadly, supports the Faculty of Theology. The foundation has as a priority the financing of scholarships for doctoral students in theology in order to enable churches in more than 20 countries to send their students for training at UCLouvain.

29 Henri Wattiaux, "La bibliothèque de la Faculté de théologie: Présence de la Fondation sur un vaste chantier," *Bulletin [Fondation Sedes Sapientiae]* 21 (2007): 5.

30 On the Archives of the Catholic World (ARCA) of Louvain-la-Neuve, see Guy Zélis, "Les fonds religieux en bibliothèques et centres de documentation en FWB," *Lectures* 198 (2016): 72–81. The ARCA Library, in agreement with the BFLT, includes quite rich collections of periodicals of movements, grey literature, etc.



FIGURE 10.1 Reading room periodicals and collections

Moreover, it also offers access to a great number of electronic periodicals and databases, managed by the University's network of libraries. It regularly acquires e-books (ensuring permanent access). It would however be mistaken to limit its resources in theology and sciences of religions to documentation in direct access. Further resources may indeed rely on holdings of the Patrimonial Reserve (BMAG), which preserves many less frequently consulted works and reviews, nonetheless relevant to given fields and accessible on request. Moreover, various interested parties may benefit from the immediate proximity of the Library of Arts with, to take just one example, the Library of the Orientalist Institute, the best in Belgium for the Christian Orient and important too for biblical languages.<sup>31</sup> Lastly, we should also point out the existence, at UCLouvain, of other resources in the religious domain, such as the Centre for Documentation on Contemporary Islam (CISMODOC), the Archives of Belgian French-speaking Catholicism (ARCA), and so on.

31 Meunier, "Le temple des Muses de l'orientalisme louvaniste," 441–462.

## 2.2 *Spatial Organisation*

As we have seen, the Theology Library is now organised as a coherent whole on the third and fourth floors of the Collège Descamps. On the third floor, in the reading room facing the Grand-Place, are the librarians' offices, a data-processing space with direct access to all resources, a reading area and display racks facilitating discovery of the latest acquisitions (books and journal issues). That space also accommodates the Basic Library in Theology and Sciences of Religions (THEO) and space devoted to encyclopaedias and dictionaries of theology (BCOM) as well as major collections of texts and documents (TDOC). On the same level, in the corridors surrounding the central patio, there are specialised libraries devoted respectively to the history of missions and evangelisation (MISS), to the history of Christianity (HECC), and to catechesis and teaching religion (CATE), ethics/morals (MORA) and pastoral care and spirituality (PAST), as well as to history and sciences of religions (HIRE). On the fourth floor, on two levels facing the Grand-Place, a second reference room houses periodical collections and holdings. On the first level, this space also accommodates the specialised library of canon law and religious law (CANO) and, on the second level, next to the journals, the collections of monographs covering several disciplines (BCOX). At the end of the corridor are two more specialised libraries dedicated, on the one side, to biblical interpretation (EXEG) and, on the other, to dogmatics, ecclesiology and ecumenism (DOGM) as well as to the sacramental and liturgy (SACR).

Let us recall again that researchers in this Library also have direct access to the various sections of the Library of Arts and Letters in the Erasmus building, in particular to the first floor, archaeology and the history of art (archaeology and Christian arts); on the second floor, a room of bibliographies (BG) and open-shelf books (UL) which deal with the entire range of scientific disciplines (general and universal encyclopaedias and dictionaries, biographical and bibliographical instruments, major university collections, etc.), as well as sections of history and pedagogy/didactics (including a media library); on the third and fourth floors, literature, linguistics and, above all, orientalism. They also benefit from all of the BFLT's services, including a computer room inside the library.

## 2.3 *On Cataloguing*<sup>32</sup>

In 1970, all of the libraries' catalogues were still on paper, and thus cataloguing the new Library began with the good old card system. The first steps

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32 Germain, "Les Bibliothèques de l'UCL: Une histoire de livres ou une histoire de personnes?" *passim* (70, 85 90, 92, etc.) pour la bibliothèque de la Faculté de théologie (BTEC).

of computerisation started in 1971–1972 at the Central Library, with the encoding – on perforated cards – of theses, as well as periodicals. The first library to computerise its catalogue – albeit in a still very elementary way – was the Library of Sciences (1980);<sup>33</sup> the creation of a single, computerised, collective catalogue was only launched some years later.

On 1st January 1991 the Theology Library began the computerisation of new acquisitions and, gradually, that of its book holdings, using the LIBIS network. The operation lasted several years, accompanied by a systematic ‘pruning’. Books borrowed and not encoded were systematically computerised from 1999 on. To date, whereas direct-access book holdings are entirely computerised, books destined for book warehouses have been removed without coding and are gradually being catalogued. Memoirs and theses in theology as well as the titles and states of journal collections are all indexed in the catalogue. Since 2009–2010, theses in theology have been the subject of a digital repository in DIALpr of UCLouvain and the earlier holdings have been digitised. From 2003 on, theses and memoirs were the object of a repository on the Bictel platform (a shared repository of electronic theses from the universities of the French Community of Belgium),<sup>34</sup> which has since been replaced by institutional repositories in participating French-speaking university institutions. Similarly, since 2009, memoirs in theology are included in a digitised repository in UCLouvain’s DIALmem data bank.

After ten years of ‘reunions’ with KU Leuven, in 1997 the authorities of the University opted for autonomous management with a new generation software, VIRTUA (Virtua Integrated Library System) which had been developed in 1998 by the VTLS company (Virginia Tech Library Systems). This was subsequently also adopted by the Catholic University Faculties of Mons (FuCaM), the University Faculties Notre-Dame de la Paix (FUNDP) in Namur, and the University Faculties Saint Louis (FUSL) of Brussels. On the horizon upcoming this year (2022), the Libraries of UCLouvain will again change their management system.

Formerly, the concept of ‘catalography’ also included other research instruments, such as the analytical catalogue, of which Michel Dorban was the administrator at the Central Library for many years. Today the services this invaluable system rendered are dealt with by the BIUL’s ‘Discovery’ interface,

33 In this regard: Luc Van Simaëys, “L’informatique, l’avenir?,” *Louvain* (1982): no. 1, 73–79.

34 Marjorie Gobin, “Un Panorama de la recherche universitaire Belge: Le Répertoire BICTEL/e of electronic theses and e-prints,” *Les cahiers de la documentation* 58, no. 2 (2004): 89–94.

together with its databases and their powerful search engines. The Theology Library also offers its users invaluable resources in this field.

#### 2.4 *Other Resources and Services*

Like the other libraries of UCLouvain, the Theology Library offers various services, a part of which is dealt with by common services coordinated by the BFLT: borrowing and reservation; inter-library loans; networks of photocopiers which can be used with a single card; work and consultation stations; Wifi; remote access to electronic resources; face-to-face guidance or by email, etc.

With regard to the limits of human resources available (equivalent to three full-time employees), the library has chosen to focus on training its users, bibliography monitoring and indicating, in the form of online collections, where free access is available, as well as promoting tools and resources bought by the BIUL. Since 2011, when it first went online,<sup>35</sup> it has never stopped offering new services, which are much appreciated by researchers.<sup>36</sup> Among its resources, for example, filed under the heading of 'Documentary resources', the page 'Electronic resources in theology, biblical studies and sciences of religions' provides, by main functional sectors, hundreds of links towards reference websites. This is a remarkable use of resources and focus.

In another area, the heading 'Aids and formations' keeps its promises. From October to December each year, the Library dispenses introductory sessions for students and doctoral researchers of the Faculty of Theology, supplemented by a Moodle site offering resources and exercises accessible all year long. Via the new 'catalogue of formations' of the BIUL, it also offers the entire university community training in the use of general and specialised documentary tools. The page 'Norms' (Standards) presents a series of tools regarding bibliographical rules and writing standards practiced at the Faculty of Theology. Lastly, the page 'Guides and tutorials' offers manuals relating to the use of general instruments (e.g. the Libellule Portal, catalogues and the search engine Discovery UCLouvain, etc.), and specialised databases (ATLA, Index Religiosus, Index Theologicus, etc.).

#### 2.5 *Partnerships*

Early in its existence, the Theology Library of Louvain-la-Neuve was involved in the creation of the Association of Libraries of Theology and Religious Information (ABTIR), founded in 1983 by Jean-François Gilmont and Jacques

35 <https://uclouvain.be/fr/bibliotheques/btec/ressources-electroniques.html> [accessed May 24, 2021].

36 We also note the creation of a Facebook page (2015) and a Twitter account (2017).

Scheuer, SJ (Moretus-Plantin Library).<sup>37</sup> At the beginning, being unable to integrate itself into the inventory of the religious information centres in Flanders and in the Netherlands<sup>38</sup> and having completed the computerisation of its collection of periodicals (up to then managed manually on large cards), ABTIR was able to envisage the creation of a complementary collective catalogue of the periodicals of francophone religious libraries at a reasonable cost, thanks to the support of the Centre for the Electronic Treatment of Documents (CETEDOC) and the University's General Centre of Documentation (CGD). It was the occasion for launching the collection REPERE (Repertory of Religious Periodicals). The collection saw several gradually increased editions, but it does not seem that the Association maintained its existence beyond the project.

Today, the library is affiliated with the Association of European Libraries of Theology (BETH), founded in 1961,<sup>39</sup> and with the Association of Christian Libraries of France (ABCF), launched in 1963.<sup>40</sup>

### 3 And Tomorrow?

Within UCLouvain, the Theology Library fits into the sector of human sciences and, in particular, in the domain of the 'humanities' (philosophy, theology, sciences of religions, biblical studies, art, history and libraries), all requiring libraries with particular profiles, which may be described as 'presence' or 'laboratory' libraries. These libraries are indeed the laboratories, the places and the principal working tools of students, researchers and professors. In these places

37 Jean-François Gilmont and Thomas P. Osborne, "Les associations de bibliothèques de théologie: Un service pour la recherche," *Revue théologique de Louvain* 15, no. 1 (1984): 73–85.

38 *Gids van theologische bibliotheken in Nederland en Vlaanderen* (Voorburg: Protestantse Stichting tot bevordering van het bibliotheekwezen en de lectuurvoorlichting in Nederland, 1983). On the Flemish counterpart, see Kris Van de Castelee, "Vereniging van Religieuze-wetenschappelijke Bibliotheecarissen (VRB): Verwezenlijkingen en perspectieven voor de toekomst," in *Omnia autem probate, quod bonum est tenete*, ed. Lamberigts and Kenis, 65–104, which is very well documented and whose scope goes far beyond the Flemish association.

39 André J. Geuns and Barbara Wolf-Dahm, "Theological Libraries: An Overview on History and Present Activities of the International Council of Associations of Theological Libraries," *INSPEL: International Journal of Special Libraries* 32, no. 3 (1998): 139–158 (accessible on the Internet).

40 On the Library of Theology under the Ancien Régime, see Jan Roegiers, "De Leuvense Bibliotheek Godgeleerdheid: 1445–2010," in *Omnia autem probate, quod bonum est tenete*, ed. Lamberigts and Kenis, 21–38.

of high frequentation, the document is at once the source, the instrument, the reference and the object of research.

In addition, the Theology Library of UCLouvain represents a beacon of excellence in the Belgian university and scientific world. With the Faculty of Theology and the RSCS Institute, it welcomes many researchers from all over the world, as well as, for the Library, 'external' readers: graduating students and students of higher education, students and researchers of other universities, institutes of Protestant theology and publics of various horizons interested in the religious domain. The demand is accentuated by the fact that other faculties of catholic or Protestant theology and other religious libraries have closed.

The Theology Library's future will depend on several factors:

- evolutions in teaching and research in the various branches of Christian and Islamic theology, as well as in biblical studies and sciences of religions, both at UCLouvain and in the university world in general;
- evolutions in university libraries, especially the directions and decisions that will be taken by the University authorities and the head librarian of UCLouvain for the BIUL, and the means that will be allocated to the Theology Library (particularly its human resources);
- the creation of the new Draper 'Learning Centre', which, in the same building, will offer new services and new types of locales for users;
- evolutions in supports and documentary tools in the disciplines covered by BTEC; currently, the printed format remains prevalent for books, collections and journals, and paper products have only partially been replaced by electronic products, but this could change.

Over the passing years, the library has been able to benefit from the collaboration of many people who, each in their own way, have contributed to making it what it has become today. We would like to thank them sincerely for that!

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