Engaged Collecting: Culture Transforming Mission
The Regis College Library, University of Toronto

Gordon Rixon, S.J.
Regis College, Toronto School of Theology, Canada
gordon.rixon@utoronto.ca

Abstract

Founded in 1930 as the “house library” of a Jesuit seminary, the Regis College Library collection presents evidence of almost 400 years of Jesuit participation in the socio-cultural development of present-day Canada. Today, the Regis Library contributes to the University of Toronto Library system, the third largest aggregated research university collection in North America. The provenance of the collection offers a vantage on the cultural encounter between European Jesuits and indigenous peoples. The palimpsest of spine markings and other collection metadata signals the replacement of encyclopedic approaches to knowledge and subject mapping with a more empirical approach to book classification based on actual patterns of collection and use. A recent pilot research project extends this empirical approach by applying advanced analytic algorithms to digitized text collections. Readers are invited to reflect on the socio-political power differences introduced by book classification and challenged by access to sophisticated computational tools.

Keywords

The Regis College Library collection, its associated layers of metadata, and the history of diverse approaches to accessing these resources presents evidence of almost four hundred years of Jesuit participation in the socio-cultural development of what in 1867 became known as Canada. Founded in
1 From 1930 to 1958, Regis College offered the program of philosophical studies required for priesthood. In 1943, Regis College added the program of theological studies required for priestly ordination to its curriculum. In 1956, the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities designated Regis College as the Toronto section of the Facultés de la Compagnie de Jésus au Canada. As the Toronto Section, Regis College became formally associated with the Collège de l’Immaculée Conception, the older Montreal section of the ecclesiastical faculties, founded in 1886 as an amalgamation of a theology program inaugurated in Trois-Rivières in 1882 and a philosophy program begun in Québec City in 1884. In 1957, Regis College became the School of Sacred Theology of St. Mary’s University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, which enabled graduands to receive civil degrees in theology. In 1958, Regis College suspended its philosophy program and continued as an exclusively theological school until 1997 when the college reintroduced a small “first studies program,” a pretheology program that serves principally Jesuit scholastics and includes the study of philosophy, humanities, and social sciences. Following the Second Vatican Council, Regis College developed the scope of its mission to include ecumenical outreach and lay formation. In 1969, Regis College became a founding member of the Toronto School of Theology (TST), an ecumenical consortium of seven theological faculties and colleges located on the St. George Campus of the University of Toronto (UT). After obtaining its own civil charter from the Government of Ontario (Regis College Act, 1978), Regis College affiliated with the UT through a memorandum of agreement that enables members of the TST to grant civil degrees in theology conjointly with the UT. As a result of the affiliation of Regis College with UT, the Regis Library has become a constituent library of the third largest university library system in North America, with some twenty-one million aggregated holdings. Regis College and its library were first located in the former Loretto Abbey close to the rail lines and harbor in downtown Toronto. After a stay in suburban North York from 1961 to 1976, the college and library relocated to central Toronto on the eastern edge of the St. George campus of UT; in 2009 they relocated to their present, more centrally located, site on campus.
Library participates today in contemporary approaches to scholarship. A recent pilot research project applies advanced analytic algorithms to digitized collections and invites contemporary users to reflect critically on the socio-political power differences introduced and challenged by access to sophisticated computational tools.

Reflection on the provenance of the collection, the development of the collection's metadata (e.g., edition and author information, subject classification and cross-reference tables, and shelving-notations), and contemporary approaches to the use of the collection and its metadata highlight a number of themes that could be identified as the hallmarks of the Jesuit “way of proceeding.” This expression refers to an approach to the advancement of Christian life and doctrine that engages positively with diverse cultural contexts by embracing their best humanistic and educational practices (including new technologies), speaks compassionately from the depths of spiritual reflection, and discerns practical, helpful ways forward in the midst of controversy. These three hallmarks are often imperfectly embodied, but still point toward a constructive, non-defensive engagement of the world from a faith perspective, which expects to find God present in other peoples, cultures, and religions.\(^2\) After considering how the provenance of the collection reflects the European origins and missionary efforts of the generations of Jesuits who travelled across the Atlantic, I will explore how the diversity they encountered accompanied a revolution in attitudes toward knowledge and approaches to book classification and use. Although I make no claim that the Regis Library itself is the epicenter of such an extraordinary story, its collection and metadata, and the aspects of their use, offer significant, emblematic data that invites and aids the interpretation of these broad cultural movements. This interpretation challenges us to continuing, self-critical reflection on the interrelations between knowledge, category definition, and the exercise of social power.

---

\(^2\) Here I am alluding to the tag coined by the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491–1556), *nuestro modo de proceder* [our way of proceeding], which is found in the Jesuit Constitutions; see *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, ed. John W. Padberg (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), n. 152, 216. One of Ignatius’s first Jesuit companions, Jerónimo Nadal (1507–1580), elaborates this phrase as *spíritu, corde, practice* [in the Spirit, from the heart, practically]. For a discussion, see John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 370–76. I am grateful to Jacques Monet, S.J. for recalling this reference and his reflections on several points of historical interpretation.
Provenance

The Regis Library, originally known as the Jesuit Seminary Library (1930), made two major efforts to establish its core collection. The first began with the college’s foundation and the inauguration of its philosophy program in 1930; the second, when the college initiated a theology program in 1943. In these two periods, the Regis Library collected philosophy and, then, theology books, soliciting donations systematically from the house libraries of Jesuit communities across Canada. In the second period, Edward Sheridan, S.J. (1912–1999), who became the rector of Regis College in 1968, extended his stay in post-war Europe—after completing a year of spiritual formation in Amiens, France—to travel and purchase books. Complemented by annual collecting, the result of these major efforts was to gather a patrimony that today encompasses close to fifty thousand carefully selected and retained items, including some 1,118 rare books published between 1543 and 1945, in seven languages, including Ojibwa. By analyzing the book stamps, book plates, and notations found on some 317 of these rare books, we are able to develop a narrative that locates the Regis Library within the history of the Jesuits in Canada and contextualizes our discussion of changing approaches to the relation of knowledge, book classification, and use of the collection and its metadata.

The publication dates of forty-six titles in the rare book collection predate the May 1611 arrival of Jesuits in New France at Port Royal (present-day Nova Scotia). Another twenty-eight texts were published prior to the return of the Jesuits to the New World in 1632, after a brief absence when the North American colony had fallen temporarily under British rule. Some 235 collected titles were published in the period between 1632 and 1773, which concludes with the promulgation of *Dominus ac redemptor*, the brief by which Pope Clement XIV suppressed the Society of Jesus on July 21, 1773. The balance of the rare titles were published in the remaining period, which includes the restoration of the Society by Pope Pius VII on August 7, 1814 with the proclamation of the bull *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*.

---

3. The fifty thousand items correspond to approximately eighty-five thousand volumes, including multi-volume works.

4. *Dominus ac redemptor* was not universally promulgated and the suppression of the Society of Jesus was not effected uniformly throughout the world. The brief was not promulgated in the province of Quebec (which was divided into the provinces of Upper Canada and Lower Canada in 1791). Not able to accept new candidates, the Society of Jesus perdured in Lower Canada until the death of the last Jesuit, Jean-Joseph Casot (1728–1800).
In addition to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century editions of texts authored by the early Jesuits, Peter Canisius (1521–1597), Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), and Girolamo Fasulo or Fasolo (Hieronymus Fasulus) (1566–1639), the collection includes one of the 686 titles known to have survived from the original library of the Quebec Jesuit College. Founded by Paul Le

5 Petrus Canisius, Manuale catholicorum, in usum pie precandi collectum (Antwerp: Christophorus Plantinus, 1588) [Regis smb 00005]. The Regis Rare Book Collection has been deposited with the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, where Pearce J. Carefoote has catalogued the titles, with always careful and often extensive descriptive notes. The research presented in this paper is greatly indebted to the bibliographic records created by Carefoote. Unique locator numbers are indicated in [].


8 Estienne Molinier, Le banquet sacré de l’Eucharistie: pour l’octave du S. Sacrement (Toulouse: Colomiez, 1647) [Regis 00090]. The Regis copy of this devotional text by Molinier (d. 1650) bears the hand-written inscription “Coll. Quebec Soc. Jesus. Cat. Ins. 1720” on its title page and a similar inscription with the year changed to 1745, which refer to two catalogues that were created for the library. The catalogues were lost in the aftermath of a turbulent period, which saw the college requisitioned as a supply depot for the invading British army in 1759. Some volumes were removed and disbursed, beginning in 1763. Casot distributed the remaining collection, largely to the Hôtel-Dieu and the Séminaire de Québec before he died in 1800. Casot gave about one hundred titles to his friend Jon Neilson, which were returned to the Jesuits by Neilson’s heirs after the restoration of the Society in 1814. These repatriated volumes remain in the library of the Scolasticate de l’Immaculée Conception, which is housed today at Collège Jean de Brébeuf in Montreal. Insight into the range of the collection can be gleaned by analyzing the surviving volumes. For a discussion of the repatriated volumes, see Johanne Biron, “Les ex-libris, ex-dono, lettres et notes manuscrites, ces témoins de l’unité et de la dispersion des collections des jésuites du Québec,” Mémoires du livre/Studies
Jeune, S.J. (1591–1664) and Charles Lalemant, S.J (1587–1674) in 1635, the college developed a full classical program. In time, the college and its library began to address the broader needs of the small European settlement and, in response to the request of Bishop François de Laval (1623–1708), later launched a seminary for indigenous youth. Complementing the subjects that a library supporting classical and seminary programs might be expected to address—humanities, philosophy, theology, canon law, liturgy, and pastoral practice—the surviving texts include a large number of titles treating medicine and science, and a lesser number in the subjects of history, geography, law, and architecture. Although it is not possible to suggest how well the surviving sample represents the original collection, one might surmise that the college and its library were responsive to the wide-ranging, day-to-day demands of an isolated community.

Regis holdings also mark key figures in the eighteenth and nineteenth century history of the Canadian church. A copy of François Guilloré’s *Conférences spirituelles pour bien aimer Jésus* was autographed in 1709 by Pierre de Lagrené, S.J. (1659–1736), who worked in the Canadian missions from his ordination in 1693 until his death. A complete 1648–1651 edition of Saint Augustine’s *Opera* has the 1790 autograph and book label of Joseph-Octave Plessis (1763–1825), the first archbishop of Quebec, as well as the book label of Plessis's close Anglophone colleague Alexander McDonnell (1762–1840), who became Plessis's first suffragan bishop, responsible for all of Upper Canada. McDonnell

---

9 *Première bibliothèque canadienne*, 15.
10 Ibid., 14–16.
Figure 1  Pedagogical Plan, Cupola, Church at Wikwemikong, pen and ink, c.1848. Nicolas Point, S.J. / The Archive of the Jesuits in Canada / Archives des jésuites au Canada
worked in Kingston, Ontario, where he laid the cornerstone in 1839 for a college seminary known as Regiopolis College, which the Jesuits would later administer as a secondary school and a fledgling undergraduate college, between 1931 and 1970.13 Among the twenty volumes later received from the Regiopolis College Library and retained in the Regis rare book collection is a 1793 edition of Théâtre de M. de Florian.14

During the same period, shortly after their 1814 restoration, the Jesuits revived their missionary activity among the indigenous peoples in Northern Ontario, establishing communities with house libraries in several locations, including the Church of the Holy Cross (1844, Wikwemikong, Manitoulin Island), Immaculate Conception Mission (1849, Fort William) and Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish (1856, Garden River), which all held volumes later received by the Regis Library. Again, some of the volumes held in the rare book collection were dedicated to the practical arts. The thirty volumes carrying the Church of the Holy Cross book stamp include an 1843 text on church art and architecture.15 The fourteen volumes from the parish in Garden River include five medical books, three of which were published in the sixteenth century.16

Shortly after the first Jesuit, Jean-Pierre Choné (1808–1878), arrived in Wikwemikong in 1844, he built a residence and a wooden church (dedicated to the Holy Cross), and assumed responsibility for a school for local indigenous youth begun in 1841 by the Austrian Leopold Society. By 1848, Choné had been joined by other Jesuits, including Nicolas Point (1799–1868), who became the superior and proposed an ambitious program of renewal and development for the indigenous community, which he described as a “reduction,” recalling the famous seventeenth-century Jesuit missions in South America. Working within an integrated vision of spiritual formation, education, and community service

14 Marquis de Florian, Théâtre de M. de Florian (Paris: Didot l’aîné, 1793) [Regis 00057].
16 Giovanni Battista da Monte, Io. Baptistæ Montani […] Expectatissimæ in aphorismos Hippocratis lectiones, summa cura collectæ, exactissimæ diligentia recognitæ, ad medicinæ studiosorum usum (Venice: Balthasar Constantinus, 1553) [Regis 00083]. Leonartho Fuchsio, Institutionum medicinae, sive methodi ad Hippocratis, Galeni, aliorumque veterum scripta recte intelligenda mire utiles libri quinque (Lyon: Sebastianus Honoratus, 1560) [Regis 00243]. Jacques Houllier, Iacobii Holleri […] In Aphorismos Hippocratis commentariij septem (Paris: Iacobus du Puys, 1582) [Regis 00278].
that he had developed through his previous experiences, Point designed, built, and decorated a stone church, reorganized the school curriculum and pedagogy, and introduced an agricultural development program. Employing his artistic talent, Point created a rhetorically sophisticated mnemonic diagram based on the lantern cupola of the new stone church to guide the implementation of his vision, which he described as a “plan of education, adapted to the needs and capacities of the Indians of Holy Cross.”

Organized by the mnemonic associations offered by the representation of a four-pillared, domed structure defining three entry points, three recesses, and three vaults crowned by a ball-flower, the plan presents three complementary pathways toward particular goals. It also encompassed educational methods offered at the school, the parish, and the industrial workshop. The specific goals announced in the vaults of the domes list the academic subjects, the virtues, and the services performed for the community. The apses of the recesses associate global and transcendent goals for each of the three pathways: science to know and sanctification (associated with an image of a dove, over the entrance to the academy), virtue to love, and reparation for sin (associated with an image of the sacred heart, over the entrance to the congregation), and work to serve and creation (associated with an image of Jesus Christ incarnate, over the entrance to the atelier). The four pillars defining the recesses enumerate the elements of practice for each of the educational locations—school, parish, and workshop—with the school utilizing two pillars, one for the structure of the environment, including the rules, registration, catalog, materials, and instruments; and the other listing a version of the familiar elements of the Parisian education method adopted in the Jesuits’ Ratio studiorum, namely, prelection, lectures, individual study, repetition, composition, examination, and public exhibits. A third pillar announces the elements of formation in

---

17 Nicolas Point, S.J., “Pedagogical plan, cupola, Church at Wikwemikong,” [c. 1848], Souvenirs & Memoires illustrés, Mission de S.te Croix, Grande Ile Manitouline, Ms., The Archive of the Jesuits in Canada/Archives des jésuites au Canada, Montreal, 80-0043-25-26, 49. Some elements are difficult to decipher due to non-standard abbreviations and cramped orthography. Point’s sketch of the stone church is available in the same volume (p. 33) with this caption: “Eglise de Sainte-croix bâtie par les Indiens de cette réduction sous la conduite des missionnaires, commencée le 31 Juillet 1849 et achevée le 26 Juillet 1852.” I am grateful to my colleague Gilles Mongeau, S.J., who first directed my attention to Point’s sketches.

18 The crowning ball is inscribed “but particulier ou Grand Moyen” and is surrounded by two-dimensional leaves containing the word “Education.”

the parish—sacramental practice, worship, song, reflection, and prayer—and a fourth notes the trades and materials addressed in the workshop. The horizontal foundation, thresholds, and lintels note the common, formational methodologies that advance learning in all three locations: emulation, natural talent, and simultaneous or mixed modes of teaching.

Point’s vision and program combines the five basic elements of Ciceronian rhetoric—which, as adapted and developed in the medieval, monastic practices of mental prayer, served as one important foundation stone for the integral spiritual pedagogy advanced by Saint Ignatius of Loyola and his companions in the Society of Jesus. Although Cicero was frequently presented as the matter to be studied in the Ratio studiorum, the pedagogical dynamics of inventio, elocutio, dispositio, memoria, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, pronunciatio, infuse the pedagogical dynamic (and the performative subtext) of intellectual and spiritual formation in the Jesuit tradition.20 These Latin terms had definitions related to knowledge collection and use: inventio as the active gathering and ordering of the resources of a tradition to address the specific agenda of forming autonomous moral agents, people who accept the responsibility of holding their own spirit in the palm of their hand;21 elocutio as the cultivation of the affectivity and desire required to shape and tension the learner’s intentional agency; dispositio as the contouring of a pathway that not only identifies de facto starting points and intended goals but also probes and defines the developmental tasks needed to traverse practically and successfully the distance thus defined; memoria as the formation of the person as a living instantiation of the tradition, able to draw on its resources in creative and faithful adaptations under unforeseen circumstances; and pronunciatio as the delivery that engages

---


21 The personal intentionality of Saint Ignatius’s program of spiritual formation is reflected in the Samuel Dworzak (d. 1689) woodcut engraving that accompanies the presentation of the examen in some seventeenth-century editions of the Exercitia spiritualia. The five steps of this reflective exercise are associated with the fingers of an open hand, upon whose palm is written “Anima mea in manibus meis semper, Ps. 118” [My soul is continually in my hands.] For example, see Ignatius of Loyola, Exercitia spiritualia S.P. Ignatii Loyolae, fundatoris Societ. Jesu (Prague: Typis Universitatis Carolo-Ferdinandae in Collegio Societatis Jesu ad S. Clementem, 1680), n. 43.
in moments of performance and silence, and that accepts its own proper role in a drama that exceeds the grasp and conception of any single player.22

Apart from the intentionality suggested by the rhetorical elements found in Point’s memory map of the curriculum and pedagogy that would run across the formation program in the school, church, and workshop, it is impossible to assess how deeply he had appropriated the Ignatian tradition, or how successfully he implemented its program in a remote “reduction” of indigenous peoples, who were to be displaced, marginalized, and disempowered by increasingly dominant newcomers. Although there is a positive external estimation of the quality of life in the Wikwemikong community in 1858, and evidence of Jesuits working alongside the Ojibway, Oddawa, and Mohawk communities of Manitoulin Island in 1860 to resist the provincial government’s effort to reinterpret an 1836 treaty ceding the island to displaced indigenous peoples, the relation between the Jesuits and the indigenous communities became fragile. It was eventually overtaken by a growing cultural divide, marked by paternalism and, at times, open conflict. By 1913, the schools were relocated to residential facilities at Spanish, Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Huron, distant from the island, with the agenda of deterring parental involvement. This was in cooperation with the official government policy of assimilating the indigenous peoples into the dominant culture.23 The Jesuits operated St. Peter Claver Industrial School for boys at Spanish until it was closed abruptly in 1958—under the pressures of poor finances, low enrolment, and increasing ambiguity about the direction of its mission—without consulting the students or their parents.24


23 For a discussion of the relations between Jesuits and the indigenous community at Wikwemikong in the years 1844–1913, see David F. Shanahan, The Jesuit Residential School at Spanish: “More Than Mere Talent” (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Jesuit Studies, 2004), 1–33.

24 St. Peter Claver Industrial School later became known as Charles Garnier Residential School for Boys and was operated with a high school curriculum from 1946 to 1958. For a first person account, see Basil H. Johnson, Indian School Days (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1988). For a discussion of the circumstances that led to the closure, see Shanahan, Jesuit Residential School, 226–56. The Daughters of Mary operated St. Joseph Residential School for Girls as a paired institution on the same property. These two institutions are commonly referred to as “the Spanish School(s).” At the request of the Government of Canada, the Jesuit Fathers of Upper Canada, the Daughters of Mary and the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie negotiated a settlement agreement (Spanish Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement, May 4, 2004), which was to serve as a template agreement for other Catholic
Although the implementation of Point’s dream of a post-restoration “reduction” failed to effectively reinvigorate the ideals of Jesuit education, the significance of the work is evident in the size and quality of the library that was assembled at Spanish and transferred to Regis College after 1958. The Jesuit community at Spanish had served as a common gathering point and retreat center for individual Jesuits living and working in the region, and had a more extensive library than might be expected today in such a remote area of the country. Although many of the more than five thousand books would not be incorporated into a graduate library focused on theology and philosophy, hundreds of titles were catalogued. No fewer than ninety-five holdings were received into the rare book collection, including volumes on botany and Confucianism, in addition to the more expected texts on theology, philosophy, spiritual practice, canon law, and Jesuitica. Close to one-third of this last category also carry the book stamp of the Church of the Holy Cross, Wikwemikong.

Classification

The Regis Library collection and its metadata bear evidence of four distinct strategies for shelving, retrieving, and using these resources. Some of the mid-nineteenth-century holdings carry shelf markings that recall the practice of associating the shelf location of books with fixed, physical spaces, a spatial mnemonic practice—intimately linked with inventio and memoria—that

25 A document in the files of the Regis Library, “Progress Report,” dated February 1976, refers to “about 5,000 books from our School at Spanish” as remaining unprocessed in the face of a move from suburban North York to central Toronto.

26 Most notable among the double stamped books is the 1611 edition of Explanatio in Psalmos by Robert Bellarmine; see here footnote 6.
enables a contemplative familiarity with the collected titles. Beyond this recollection of an earlier strategy—never applied programmatically to the Regis collection—spine markings and catalogue records indicate the systematic use of three classifications systems: Dewey Decimal Classification, Lynn-Peterson Alternate Classification for Catholic Books, and the Library of Congress Classification. These various approaches present a relative ordering of titles, *i.e.* locating titles in relation to other titles and a shelf order free from any static association with a physical location.

The palimpsest of spine markings on some of the older retained titles recalls the history of relative classification schemes, and the sets of categories that reflected and constructed subject headings for successive cohorts of scholars. As its initial philosophy collection was being assembled, the Regis Library adopted the Dewey Decimal Classification system (DDC), conceived by Melvil Dewey (1851–1931) in 1873, initially applied at Amherst College and Columbia University, and then received broadly as the first relative shelf ordering scheme. Dewey's scheme enabled an encrypted approach to knowledge, which was

---

27 See, for instance, André Dupuis, *Introduction au plan de Jérusalem et des ses faubourgs* (Paris: É. Proux, 1841) [Regis 00629] and Guillaume Daubenton, *La vie de Saint Jean-François Régis* (Lyon: Louis Lesne, 1843) [Regis 00229]. These two holdings carry the St. Peter Claver Industrial School book-stamp and have shelf markings "K" and "D" respectively. The active appropriation of the resources of a tradition through use of spatial mnemonics and personal rumination began to erode in the late sixteenth century, when the French Humanist Petrus Ramus (1515–1572) associated knowledge with collecting and classifying specimens by means of paperbound pictorial charts of dialectical bifurcations. For a discussion of Ramus and his influence on Enlightenment scholarship, see Walter J. Ong, S.J., *Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue. From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958). Until the 1960s access to the stacks of the Regis Collection was restricted to professors and librarians who would retrieve books for students who had special permission to read outside the short list of texts recommended for specific courses. Books listed on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* were marked with a cross on their spines and kept locked in a special cage known informally as "Hell." See *Index librorum prohibitorum*, SS.mi D.N. Pii PP. xxi iussu editus, anno MDCCCLXL ([Vatican City]: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1940) [Regis 00035]. Although these formerly prohibited books entered the general circulating collection some years ago, many still carry their special spinal markings as a scar that announces their previous ignominy. The *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus commend that each college have a library, but the key was not made broadly available. See *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, n. 372.

28 For a history of the classification and shelf ordering of books and notation systems, see Leo E. LaMontagne, *American Library Classification, With Special Reference to the Library of Congress* (Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, 1961).
divided into four areas, three realms addressed by the faculties of reason (science and the arts), imagination (literature), and memory (geography, biography, and history) and a fourth area, generalia, that could not be associated with any specific cognitive faculty. Together, the four areas encompassed ten broad classes, whereby each class was split into ten divisions, and each of those divisions was further broken down into ten sections—allowing each subsection to be associated with a three digit Arabic numeral-based notation—which could be still further subdivided by the addition of a decimal trailing addendum that contributed more discipline-specific information. In effect, Dewey classified knowledge, not books, and then associated a book with a class, division, section, and crosscut of knowledge, providing a notation that could be used to associate a book with other books and assign a relative shelf order. Author, title, and subject card catalogues and subject cross-reference tables were developed to offer additional avenues through which to search and access a collection.29 In open stack libraries, where it was possible for researchers to read the titles as presented in their shelf order, Dewey’s new approach would prove helpful not only for locating and retrieving books, but also for discovering (and creating) associations among books. Considered in terms of a rhetorical analysis, the use of the DDC signals a preference for dispositio over memoria as the ascendant principle ordering the gathering (inventio) of books in the collection.

By the 1940–1941 academic year, Francis Nelligan, S.J. (1902–1960) embarked on the ambitious program of converting the library’s classification system to the 1937 Lynn-Peterson variant of the Library of Congress Classification system (LC) known as “An Alternate Classification for Catholic Books” (ACC),30 which exploited the then-unassigned BQ class division in the LC system to create a complementary classification structure for specifically Catholic books under four divisions of Christian Literature (BQ), Theology (BQT), Canon Law (BQV), and Church History (BQX), while retaining the LC divisions for the Bible (BS), non-Catholic Doctrinal Theology (BT), Practical Theology (BV), and Denominational History (BX).31 In ACC, one division, Theology (BQT), gathers and associates Catholic doctrinal, moral, ascetic, mystic, and pastoral theology,

31 Ibid., lvii.
as well as devotional literature and liturgy. The effect is to maintain the association and interrelations among theological reflection, the moral life, religious experience and public worship. For instance, within ACC, works treating the beatific vision would be classed under doctrinal theology at BQT1549; works addressing Ignatian prayer would be classed under ascetic theology at BQT2262; and works addressing Carmelite contemplative prayer would be classed under mystic theology at BQT2471. Within LC, works treating the beatific vision would be found under doctrinal theology at either BT102 (Doctrine of God) or BT848 (Eschatology), and works on prayer by the two spiritual authors would be located under Christian Denominations, Roman Catholic Church at either BX2179.L4 or BX2179.T4, without flagging assignments to ascetical meditation and mystical contemplation, restrictive assignments that might be disputed today. These specific comparisons bring to light the significance of classification decisions as topics are identified, interrelated, isolated, misrepresented, or neglected by the construction and application of class, division, and section schedules.

After Regis College became a founding member of the Toronto School of Theology and, thereby, an affiliated college of the University of Toronto, the Regis Library began to access university services. By the late 1980s, new acquisitions were being catalogued and circulated using the university’s electronic database, which was structured in the LC system. Although the ACC system had offered distinctive advantages, revisions of the classifications were lagging and no longer vigorously maintained. The LC classification BQ had been assigned to Buddhism and now conflicted with the overlaid use of BQ for Catholic topics within the ACC system. By 1997, a major effort was underway to reclassify and catalogue all the Regis Library holdings in LC, a task which was carried on by teams of lay collaborators, led by successive chief librarians, Barbara Geiger, Lorna Young, and Teresa Helik. The project was accelerated and finally completed in preparation for the move to the college’s present location in 2009, at which time the legacy card catalogues became redundant.

The Library of Congress system (LC) as known today was developed by John Russell Young (1840–1899) following the completion of the new legislative library in 1897 and a careful consideration of the three credible alternate approaches available at the time, the DCC, Cutter’s Expansive Classification (a non-encyclopedic approach developed in 1892–1893 that applied an

---

32 Another example would be under Christian Literature within ACC (BQ); the shelf ordering of Thomas Aquinas’s Commentary on the Gospel of St. John (BQ6856) would be proximate to his treatment of doctrine in the Summa theologiae (BQ6835), whereas in LC these would be separated and assigned to BS491.2.T5 and BX1749.T5 respectively.
expandable schedule of classifications with an alphanumeric notion according to the size of a collection), and the Halle Schema (a German encyclopedic approach developed in 1888 with mnemonically significant single letter classes).33 Young’s guiding insight in the development of the LC system was to abandon encyclopedic approaches and to classify books, not knowledge. Thus, he adopted a more empirical approach, which was based on actual patterns of collecting and of evolving topic and subject association (as identified by experts in the subject).34 Today, five LC divisions gather Christianity (BR), Bible (BS), Doctrinal Theology (BT), Practical Theology (BV), and Christian Denominations (BX). A major implication of this approach was that Catholic libraries adopting LC also adopted the discipline structure identified by subject experts associated with American universities founded in the Protestant traditions. Spirituality lost its home in Theology (BQT) and was relocated to either Christian Denominations (BX) or the Christian Life, within the division of Practical Theology (BV).

Contemporary Research

My discussion has identified several threads in the warp and weft of the history of the Regis Library, an account of the assembly of the collection, the development of its metadata, and the use of these resources that has gone beyond the library’s current context to reflect on the four-hundred-year old mission of the Society of Jesus in Canada and the Jesuits’ legacy of social, cultural, and ecclesial relations with the indigenous population. If there has been a persistent direction in this account, it has been a movement away from locating books within the horizon of encyclopedic knowledge, toward a humbler account of one’s self and one’s place in the universe, an approach that grapples with a more empirical methodology, addressing emerging patterns, cultural diversity, conflicting viewpoints, epistemic uncertainty, and the continuing need to reconstruct the transitional categories that frame our questions about what we might yet come to understand more comprehensively.

Today, libraries are grappling with emerging technologies that are transforming approaches to gathering, classifying, and using collections. Collaborative digitization projects can make extraordinary amounts of material available to expanding groups of users at virtually no marginal cost. Sets of

---

33 LaMontagne, American, 204–18.
metadata about collections and their use are being recast as cultural artifacts, themselves subject to analytic investigation and critical reflection. Advanced analytic tools are being developed to investigate meaningful patterns in text and metadata that evade the capacity of the unaided mind.

The Lonergan Research Institute at Regis College and the Regis Library are participating in a pilot research project known as the “Knowledge Kiosk,” led by the Crivella West Corporation with the collaboration of several other institutional partners.35 The project provides the computational platform and analytic tools that allow researchers to identify statistically significant word patterns through the repeated application of a saliency test. The progressively refined results highlight promising texts for close reading and testing interpretative hypotheses.

The saliency test is an iterative four-step process that guides the refinement of an analytic algorithm (a set of instructions based on Boolean logic) that selects a subset of text segments of an assigned word length from a target set comprised of a user-designated body of texts. First, the relative frequency of each word (or word pattern) occurring in the target set is computed by determining how often each word appears in any contiguous segment of a defined length. How often does each word appear in a window of “n” words as the window rolls through the target set? Second, a similar process is applied to a restricted result set of text segments that satisfy a set of Boolean conditions. How often does each word occur in a window of “n” words as the window rolls through the result set? Third, the salient words are identified. Which words occur with significantly greater (or lesser) frequency in the result set in comparison to target set? And finally, these results are assessed to determine how the algorithm could be adjusted to focus on results even more relevant to the subject matter being investigated. At any time, usually when the result set has become manageable in size, the result set can be used to guide close reading of text windows in their original context or to identify potential fruitful windows from the same or different authors to compare and contrast. The process can be self-directed and does not require more than an intuitive grasp of the underlying statistical concepts and computational tools.

35 The pilot project was initiated on April 8, 2011. The other institutional collaborators and supporters include the following: National Institute of Newman Studies, the Kelly Library of the University of St. Michael’s College, the Henry Nouwen Trust, the Jesuits in English Canada, the Trustees of the Literary Estate of Bernard Lonergan and the University of Toronto Press. Crivella West Incorporated is a knowledge process focused commercial firm based in Carnegie, Pennsylvania. Arthur Crivella and Wayne West are its principals.
A similar process can be applied to metadata associated with texts. Subject classifications could be correlated with salient word patterns from previously classified texts, which would then be used to identify other unclassified texts or to suggest potential relations to texts classified under other categories. This research tool could be used to support the development of new subject classifications based on the critical interpretation of emerging or previously overlooked patterns of word usage. The tool could also be employed to assemble the empirical data required to evaluate existing subject classification schemes and bring greater transparency to the definition and promotion of the categories that shape cultures and scholarship. Potentially, a substantive development of the project could even obviate the assumed need for subject classification schemes. Although the analytic techniques applied in the pilot research project are not yet broadly available, they promise to help democratize the production and assessment of critical knowledge.

Today, the Regis Library responds to the needs of a diverse range of patrons from its modest facilities at the heart of one of the world’s leading research universities. Women, men, faculty, scholars, students, believers, non-believers, Jesuits, laity, indigenous peoples, and newcomers from over sixty-five different countries discover resources—titles, provenance, and metadata—representing four hundred years of transformative cultural, religious, and scholarly encounter. Beyond a mere accumulation of texts and artifacts, the collection invites its patrons to acknowledge their histories responsibly, appropriate their traditions critically, and engage creatively their aspirations for intentional living.