Expanding the Collection: A New Strategy for the John Stuart Mill Library

It has been three years since the John Stuart Mill Library project was launched and this summer the steering group reviewed the strategy to see what had been achieved and in which direction we should now be heading. Thanks to grants from the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation and the National Manuscript Conservation Trust, not to mention gifts from our generous private donors and Friends of the Library, we have now managed to make major inroads into the mapping of the marginalia and treatment of books in disrepair. We have also been delighted to work with our partners in the University of Alabama who have been digitizing the marginalia and creating a database to make it generally and freely available. These projects are all still ongoing but we are now looking at two new challenges for the collection: making it more widely available to visitors and expanding it through acquisition.

We have some exciting ideas about making the collection more widely available and we will explore those over the coming year but we have already made some great strides in acquiring new items — read all about it inside!
ACQUISITIONS

The New Arrivals

In the early spring of 2018, after several years of collecting, antiquarian book dealer Hamish Riley-Smith produced a catalogue of letters by James and John Stuart Mill and books that have a strong association with them. This was very exciting for the library steering group and with the help of one of our major donors, Christopher Kenyon, we purchased four items for the library - two letters by John Stuart Mill and two books from his library in Avignon. These are the first major additions since the collection was received in 1905.

Books

- *An examination of Sir William Hamilton’s philosophy and of the principal questions addressed in his writings. 3rd edition.*

This volume was in Mill’s library in Avignon when he died there in 1873. The library was sold off in 1905 when Helen Taylor returned to England but many of the volumes (including this one) contained this bookplate

- A translation into French of Mill’s *On Liberty*, inscribed by Mill (but never given) to a M Escoffier. Again it bears the bookplate from the Avignon sale in 1905.
Letters

• **Autograph letter signed to Mrs Mary Johnson. Blackheath Park, Kent, April 1868**

This letter was read out at the inaugural meeting of the Birmingham Branch of the National Society of Women’s Suffrage in 1860 and confirms Mill’s strong support and belief in the cause of women’s suffrage.

“Dear Madam, I am very happy to hear that you have formed at Birmingham branch of the National Society for Women’s Suffrage, and I wish you most cordially all success in your important work. There is no movement to which I should be more happy to devote my time and labour than this one, the consequences of which are likely to be so momentous and so beneficial to both sexes. The pressure of my occupations will, however, make it impossible for me to be present at the meeting to which you do me the honour to invite me. I am Dear Madam very sincerely yours J.S. Mill”

• **Autograph letter signed to Thomas Falconer, Editor of “London Review” 1835**

John Stuart Mill was the editor in all but name of the *London Review* and this letter reveals his close involvement in the running of that periodical. It was formerly owned by Professor F A Hayek who visited Somerville in 1943 during Margaret Thatcher’s first year at the college. Thatcher was later to cite Hayek as one of her key influences.

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**On Display**

All four items will be on display at our Michaelmas Term Library Open Day when Professor Roger Crisp, Philosophy Fellow at St Anne’s College University of Oxford, will give an informal talk.

Also on display will be some of the repaired items (see p6), letters from JSM to Mary Somerville, inviting her to be the first signatory on his petition to Parliament requesting the franchise be extended to women, and letters establishing the gift of the library to Somerville in 1905.
Professor Roberts took as his theme John Stuart Mill’s vision of a liberal international order (though he gamely offers a bottle of champagne to anyone who can find that phrase in Mill’s writings!), teasing out Mill’s ideas firstly through a review of some of his works, (covering *On Liberty*, *A Few Words on Intervention* and *Considerations on Representative Government*), and secondly through an examination of his relationship with the concepts of Colonialism, International Law and Louis Napoleon (whom he loathed). He noted Mill’s tendency towards *ethnocentric universalism* ‘that is the touching principle that the rest of humanity should be like us’ and *temporal parochialism*, ‘the belief that all previous ages were benighted and only now has true enlightenment and the possibility of creating new international order been accorded to us’. Mill’s view of a liberal international order was never fully worked through, according to Roberts, but he gave us glimpses of a number of different visions—European, global, dependent on benevolent use of armed forces, dependent on changes in political institutions, from within the state and from the environment outside. Roberts quotes from Piotr Wandycz who sums it up:

‘It is exceedingly difficult to present a clear picture of J S Mill’s ideas on international society[...]The clearness of his exposition of his views was often dimmed by an attempt to be fair to all parties and to see the question from too many points of view simultaneously. The result was often lack of consistency but also a complete absence of dogmatism’ *


We are delighted to announce that in 2019, the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Subjection of Women*, our speaker will be **Graham Wallas Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics, Anne Philips.** The lecture will take place at Somerville College on **Friday 24th May 2019**
When, some four years ago, Frank Prochaska first showed me the small room containing the John Stuart Mill Library, I was astonished that such an important collection had survived, that it had found its way to Somerville and that I had never heard of it before. Since then, thanks to Frank and Anne Manuel, its past life has been revealed and the focus is now on its exciting future.

History was my subject and I have always felt at home in libraries. Some years ago, I was involved in fund-raising for both of Manchester’s well-known libraries with special collections, the John Rylands and Chetham’s. It was clear from what Frank told me that the JSM Library project would have great potential for scholarship and research, especially in view of the extensive marginalia found in the collection, which have been described as “a virtual goldmine for Mill scholars”.

The project needs a good deal of specific support. The collection requires a fair amount of conservation and repair, and it could do with more space and better access within the College library, if this can be accommodated. Furthermore, opportunities may well arise for additional items to be acquired, to extend the range of this wonderful collection. Only recently, Anne has been successful in buying four items from a specialist antiquarian bookseller, which is splendid news.

My wife Margaret is a Somervillian and an Honorary Fellow, and we are both enthusiastic about the JSM Library project, which is so worthwhile and unique to Somerville. This is such a satisfying way of continuing our support for, and our long and happy association with, the College.

Christopher Kenyon

Christopher and Margaret Kenyon are founder members of the Friends of the John Stuart Mill Library and have been generous supporters of all the work that we have undertaken since then. We asked them how they came to be involved with the collection. Christopher replies:
In 2016, the Library was successful in obtaining a grant of £15,000 from the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT) for the treatment of 60 books in the collection that contained marginalia by the Mills but which were in an unstable condition, making their consultation problematic. The project began in August 2017 and was completed in July 2018. In fact 80 books were able to be treated over the course of the project and many more benefitted from innovative materials (box supports, wrappers and toned archival cotton ties) which stabilized volumes not prioritized for treatment, improving the aesthetic of the collection at the same time. Each book has its own detailed record of condition and treatment along with ‘before’ and ‘after’ photographs for the benefit of future researchers and conservators.

An important part of the project for the funders was the training and development aspect. The conservation treatments were carried out by a number of conservators with a mix of experience and expertise. Accredited conservators supervised newly qualified members of staff and the project was led by early career conservator, Nikki Tomkins. This ensured that skills were transferred between colleagues, and provided a significant opportunity to develop practical techniques. For example, the use of the board slotting technique produced adaptations to the method used in the studio, and training sessions were organized for new members of staff.

The treatment carried out was mostly undertaken in the studios of the Oxford Conservation Consortium and included board reattachment, reinforcing joints, and textblock repairs. The materials used were combinations of toned Japanese Kozo-fibre papers, toned aerocotton and archival calf tanned leather. Where possible, treatments were minimal and focused on stabilizing the mechanical structure of a volume to enable it to be handled safely and to support any subsequent digitization of the volume. Occasionally treatment required working around previous repairs, which were causing additional problems to the object. In one example, humidification was used to separate two pages that had been adhered together.
during an earlier clumsy repair, revealing manuscript annotations.

In addition to the items brought to the studio, 25 items were treated *in situ* at Somerville College. This treatment focused on minor paper repairs, reinforcing board attachments, and stabilizing fragile spine pieces or endbands.

The grant from the NMCT has enabled increased access to the collection by allowing library staff to let researchers handle and use books that were previously too delicate to be used. We have also been able to exhibit books that had been in too poor a state to be shown. More opportunities to display the books have been created as a result of the work done on their conservation. For example, the work carried out *in situ* at the John Stuart Mill Library provided an opportunity to invite members of the college and other visitors to drop in and meet the conservators in person. We also held a seminar on the collection at which we were able to showcase the work being done by the OCC and some of their interesting findings. It featured a display of conserved volumes in the library for members of the public to see.

Our social media presence has also benefited from the conservation project with three of the conservators working on the collection contributing to the project blog, sharing the treatment approaches with a wider audience. Facebook posts featuring before and after pictures from the studio were a regular feature on the John Stuart Mill Library page. The publicity has also increased interest in the project as a whole amongst alumni and the Oxford academic community and we have received further donations for the digitization project as a result. This will enable us to continue with our aim of conserving all the books in the collection that are in need and mapping all the marginalia, making it freely available via a bespoke database built for this purpose (see p 11).

Huge thanks go to the NMCT and the Oxford Conservation Consortium, particularly Jane Eagan and Nikki Tomkins.
In 1905, Somerville College received a bequest that immediately established its library as one of Oxford’s leading conservators of the just-completed nineteenth century. Christ Church holds the Carroll collection, and Keble College the books, correspondence, and personal papers of John Keble, but Somerville curates the personal library of John Stuart Mill, Victorian Britain’s leading philosophical and political theorist, and perhaps the dominant figure in Victorian intellectual life from the 1860s through the 1880s.

At first, the historical importance of this collection was less significant to the College than its practical and pedagogical benefits. At roughly 2000 volumes, the library from Mill’s house in Blackheath immediately increased the size of the college library by nearly a third and offered Somerville’s female students, then barred from taking degrees at the University and using the Bodleian Library, access to significant works in classics, history, philosophy, literature, law, political economy, and liberal theory.

By the 1960s, circumstances had changed. The University of Toronto Press began its landmark edition of The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill (33 volumes, 1963-1991), with many of the individual volumes in the Toronto edition include references to annotations made and textual variations noted within the "SC," the Somerville Collection of Mill’s publications. In 1969, recognizing the unique scholarly importance of the Mill library, the College formally reassembled Mill’s remaining books into a Special Collection with its own dedicated space and began the lengthy process of physical conservation.

As a small number of subsequent scholars discovered, the marks and annotations in the Mill library extend far beyond copy-editing corrections. Articles from Edward Alexander (English Language Notes 1969), William Peterson and Fred Stanley (Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 1972), and, most recently, Frank Prochaska (History Today 2013), have shown that the handwritten marginalia found throughout the collection has the ability to enrich, expand, and revise our understanding of John Stuart Mill’s readerly judgment, writerly influences, and intellectual networks.

In support of its mission to sustain the University of Oxford’s research and teaching mandates, as well as to promote the College’s historic special collections, Somerville issued a public call, in the November 2014 issue of Somerville Magazine, “to foster research into the annotations and to preserve the collection.” The result was a transatlantic collaboration with the University of Alabama to digitize and render fully searchable all of the marginalia in the Mill library. That project is now well underway at millmarginalia.org, which both archives and renders fully searchable all of the handwritten marks and annotations recorded thus far.
What has begun to emerge from the margins, flyleaves, and endpapers of the Mill Collection is something akin to the unauthorized autobiography of John Stuart Mill, written by himself in candid moments of reading. This more unguarded commentary on Mill's life both complements and productively complicates the account prepared for his formal intellectual and professional *Autobiography*, an early draft of which was extant as early as January 1853, and the final draft of which was published with Mill's expressed consent in October 1873, six months after his death.

Among the more famous biographical experiences recorded in Mill's published story of his life is his own remarkable childhood education. At age three, Mill began reading Greek, including Aesop and Xenophon. Ages three to seven saw Mill consuming Greek, Latin, and English histories by Herodotus, Thucydides, Hume, and Gibbon; select Platonic dialogues in the original language; "light" literature by Defoe, Cervantes, Edgeworth, and others; and mathematical treatises on arithmetic. At seven he graduated to an intensive course of Latin, led by Caesar and Cicero, along with geometry, and by ten he was learning all that was then known of chemistry. Newton, physics, and mechanics followed, with the complete works of canonical figures in English literature—Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Cowper, Spenser, Scott, Dryden—serving as humanistic accompaniment. By age twelve, he began an intensive study of logic, then dominated by Aristotle and such neo-Aristotelians as Phillipe Du Trieu and Franco Burgersdijk.

Crucially, the evidence for this almost incredible program of home schooling is entirely circumstantial. Certainly something remarkable must have happened to the boy John Stuart, but the formidable intellect of the adult J. S. Mill provides only indirect testimony about the ways in which "The Child is father of the Man." Also second-hand is the retrospective reconstruction provided over thirty years later in the *Autobiography*, which, like most intentional reconstructions of the past, conceals and reveals in equal measure. Somewhat closer to the moment was a letter written to Sir Samuel Bentham on 30 July 1819, in which the then thirteen-year-old Mill enumerated his childhood reading; unfortunately, the MS. for this letter, surely already suspect due to the possibility of youthful boasting, has since been lost.

Recently found, however, on the top shelf of section A in Somerville’s Mill Collection, is the author’s personal copy of Burgersdijk's *Institutionum Logicarum*. Even more revealing than the book’s mere presence in Mill’s library is the fact that this small volume contains more individual examples of marginalia than any other yet mapped, photographed, and transcribed for the digitization project. In all, 351 pages contain at least one mark or annotation, with 1568 examples of marginalia in all, including a handful of rather juvenile-looking additions:

Pictured below, page 143 features an interlinear and apparently idle triangle, page 170 a fan-like flare at the
MARGINALIA AS (UNAUTHORIZED) AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN THE JOHN STUART MILL COLLECTION BY PROFESSOR ALBERT PIONKE continued

end of a chapter break, and page 357 a series of closely made vertical lines marking the conclusion of the book’s first half.

Initially inscrutable but ultimately more exciting are the volume’s 575 handwritten marginal numbers. Two comments recorded in Mill’s published Autobiography begin to shed light on their function. First, while recalling the "peculiar care" with which he was made to study Aristotle’s Rhetoric at age ten or eleven, Mill remarks that his father required him to "throw the matter of it into synoptic tables." When, at age twelve, he had progressed to Aristotle’s Organon and other, unnamed "Latin treatises on the scholastic logic," Mill remembers that he was expected to provide his father, "each day . . . in our walks, a minute account of what I had read . . . answering his numerous and searching questions" and hoping to avoid “incurring his displeasure by my inability to solve difficult problems for which I did not see that I had not the necessary previous knowledge.”

Placed side by side, the marginal numbers found on pages 16, 22, and 43 strongly suggest that Mill had recalled his earlier lesson by constructing marginal synoptic tables throughout Burgersdijk’s book, thereby equipping himself with a kind of running index to enable him to keep up during those afternoon walks with his father.

This was, without question, an enormous amount of work, enough to excuse the expressions of, perhaps, rebellious (because lacking utility) relief at completing a sentence, a chapter, and the book’s first half, all discernible in the already pictured youthful marks from pages 143, 170, and 357. The combination of studiousness and adolescence found within Institutionum Logicarum also represents the first material proof of the young John Stuart’s education. And this handwritten evidence speaks eloquently of how the talented and anxious boy sought to cope with “the chilling sensation of being under the critical eye” of James Mill, remembered by his son as "one of the most impatient of men."

That Burgersdijk is not mentioned by name in the Autobiography, despite his book serving as the occasion for such worried labor, suggests the suppressions required for even posthumous publication. That a series of interconnected handwritten numbers could reveal this much about a formerly inaccessible part of Mill’s life asserts the potential for discovery, both personal and intellectual, within the margins of Somerville’s John Stuart Mill Collection. Stay tuned to millmarginalia.org for further developments.
MILL MARGINALIA ONLINE PROJECT UPDATE

In April 2018, Albert Pionke and the University of Alabama Digital Humanities Centre launched their much-anticipated *Mill Marginalia Online* website. This ground-breaking database is dedicated to making fully searchable all of the verbal and nonverbal marginalia within the John Stuart Mill Library collection. Pionke has been photographing the marginalia over the last few years but with tens of thousands of original handwritten marks and annotations to capture, the project has a way to go before we have a comprehensive record. However earlier this year with twenty percent of the collection digitized, the MMO was launched and to date covers 328 volumes, 104 distinct marginalia types and 109 separate authors. It has accumulated sufficient data to support future research, not just about Mill and his circle (including his father, Utilitarian James Mill), but also more broadly focused on 19th-century reading practices, bibliographical description, paleographical attribution, corpus analysis, and literary aesthetics. Moreover, the project’s innovative combination of SQL and noSQL database encoding, flexible metadata schema, and intuitive user interface are all transparent and offered free to researchers, thereby providing a reusable platform for future digital humanities projects around the world.

The database enables users to search for a particular mark such as a double exclamation mark or a piece of text (“Nonsense”) or to explore the markings within an individual volume. As Albert says:

“It is extremely unusual in the case of a writer as well known and thoroughly documented as Victorian Britain’s leading philosophical empiricist and liberal theorist, John Stuart Mill, to discover a substantial amount of new, unpublished work. However, that is precisely what is contained in the textual margins, endpapers, flyleaves, and title pages of Mill’s private library, once housed at his residence in Blackheath, London. These 1700 books contain tens of thousands of original handwritten marks and annotations that, combined together, are at least equal in volume to Mill’s longest published works, his still-read *System of Logic* (1843) or *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). Moreover, the genres represented within the marginalia are fascinatingly unfamiliar to readers accustomed to the measured rationality of Mill’s public prose: unauthorized autobiography, undelivered correspondence, and unfiltered thoughts, all composed prior to and often apparently without the expectation of subsequent readers.”
One of the most heavily annotated books in the library of John Stuart Mill, is his presentation copy of the twelve-volume *History of Greece* by George Grote, Utilitarian disciple of his father James Mill and close friend of himself. It was published between 1846 and 1856, and Mill reviewed it twice in the *Edinburgh Review* for 1846 and 1853.

The last five volumes in the Mill room are in very poor condition, having been used by generations of Somervillians studying Greats. There are some 550 annotations to both the text and the notes. Many of them are trivial, not to say pedantic; but Mill’s knowledge of Greek is shown by the number that correct or query Grote’s translation of (especially) Thucydides, and he offers some telling modern historical parallels to the narrative. The most interesting group however are those that correct Grote’s topographical remarks from personal autopsy; Grote had never visited Greece, but in 1855 Mill made an extended tour of the continent, including south Italy, Sicily and mainland Greece. He is very sharp and critical of Grote’s views, and often adds personal comments – Thrace is bitterly cold; December is warm enough at Agrigentum; I know well what the mud of that country is.

Mill and his father had earlier been very dismissive of Grote as a Radical politician in the reformed Parliament of 1832, as someone who behaved as if he lived in Plato’s Republic; but Mill’s admiration of the *History* was great: in a letter of 1855 he wrote of Macaulay’s *History of England*: ‘What a difference between it and Grote’s History of Greece, which is less brilliant, but far more interesting in its simple veracity & because, instead of striving to astonish, he strives to comprehend & explain.’

Mill and Grote were close personal friends, often dining together in London (because of his relationship and marriage with Harriet Taylor, Mill was ostracised by conventional society). At the end of his life in 1872 Mill wrote from Avignon: ‘You judged truly that the loss of Mr Grote leaves a great blank in my life. He was the oldest & by far the most valued of my surviving old friends.’

But my examination of the marginalia left me with a puzzle: when did he make them? They seem to be a unity and clearly reflect the travels of 1855, yet Mill had received the successive volumes on publication from 1846 onwards, and had already written his two reviews before he went on his continental tour. The mystery remains.
What role have wives and partners played in the history of political thought? And how might attention to the labors of these ‘private’ figures challenge our understanding of who and what gets counted in determining the boundaries of scholarship? These are the questions that inform my forthcoming article on Harriet Taylor Mill [HTM] in *Hypatia*, which is part of a symposium issue concerning the wives and partners of canonical figures from Socrates to Marx and Engels.

HTM has always posed something of a quandary for JS Mill scholars because Mill himself made much of his wife’s abilities and of their intellectual partnership. He even dedicated *On Liberty* to her as “the inspirer, and in part the author” of all that was best in his writings. Consequently, HTM’s role in her famed (second) husband’s life has invited some attention, and much of it less than favorable: at worst HTM is characterized as shrewish and domineering (Himmelfarb, 1974) and at best she is described as a decent partner though without any qualities of genius (Okin, 1979). I suggest, however, that much of the received understanding of HTM’s intellect and partnership with Mill overlooks her experiential politics. That politics is rooted in critical perceptions of the ‘everyday’. As a woman operating within, yet also in defiance of, the gender norms of her time, HTM negotiated a difficult set of commitments to political reform, to an unusual relationship that drew social reproach, and to familial obligations that sometimes conflicted with her politics and partnership with Mill. Moreover, these experiences contributed to, and directly challenged JS Mill’s own feminism in critical ways.

When HTM’s experiential politics is given its due alongside examination of her relationship to Mill, a larger problem in studies of the canon comes to light: the uncredited role of wives and partners in the history of political thought. As debates concerning gender politics in academia are gaining renewed attention today, we might also consider the ways in which the very borders of scholarly life have relied on overly narrow definitions of intellectual labor – definitions that are gendered in terms of the perspectives they privilege and exclude. And who better to help us question those customary borders than HTM herself who, together with Mill, strove to live beyond them?
The Friends of the John Stuart Mill Library group was formed in 2016 by Somerville College to provide a focus for Mill enthusiasts from around the world to engage with this important collection of books and marginalia. The aim of the college in setting up the group is to provide support for the preservation and digitisation of the collection, to generate interest in and research on the library and to enable the dissemination of information and research about Mill and the collection to a wider audience.

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JOHN STUART MILL LIBRARY
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- **LIBRARY OPEN DAY FEATURING RECENT ACQUISITIONS**
  Tuesday November 6th 2018

  An open day in the library when our new acquisitions will be on display along with a number of other letters from John Stuart Mill in our collections. Professor Roger Crisp from St Anne’s College Oxford will be on hand to talk about their significance

- **TEA WITH JOHN STUART MILL**
  Tuesday 19th March 2019

  An opportunity to hear about the latest developments in researching, preserving and digitizing the John Stuart Mill Library

- **ANNUAL JOHN STUART MILL LECTURE**
  Friday 24th May 2019

  2019 is the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Subjection of Women* and we will be welcoming Professor Anne Philips, Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics. Come and mark the occasion with us!
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