

University of Oxford



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Gr. 32

- The University of Oxford (informally Oxford University or Oxford, derived from the Latin, *Universitas Oxoniensis*) is a university located in Oxford, England, United Kingdom. It is the oldest university in the English-speaking world, and the second-oldest surviving university in the world. Although its exact date of foundation is unclear, there is evidence of teaching as far back as 1096. The University grew rapidly from 1167 when Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris. In post-nominals the University of Oxford is commonly abbreviated as Oxon., from the Latin *Universitas Oxoniensis*, although Oxf is now used in official university publications, despite widespread and acknowledged criticism



After disputes between students and Oxford townsfolk in 1209, some academics fled north-east to Cambridge, where they established what became the University of Cambridge. The two ancient English universities have many common features and are often jointly referred to as *Oxbridge*. In addition to their cultural and practical associations, as a historic part of British society, they have a long history of rivalry with each other.





- Most undergraduate teaching at Oxford is organised around weekly tutorials at self-governing colleges and halls, supported by classes, lectures and laboratory work organised by University faculties and departments. Oxford regularly contends with Cambridge for first place in the UK league tables, and consistently ranks among the top five universities in the world, according to global rankings. For more than a century, it has served as the home of the Rhodes Scholarship, which brings students from a number of countries to study at Oxford as postgraduates or for a second bachelor's degree.

History

- The University of Oxford has no known foundation date. Teaching at Oxford existed in some form in 1096, but it is unclear at what point a university came into being.
- The expulsion of foreigners from the University of Paris in 1167 caused many English scholars to return from France and settle in Oxford. The historian Gerald of Wales lectured to such scholars in 1188, and the first known foreign scholar, Emo of Friesland, arrived in 1190. The head of the University was named a chancellor from at least 1201, and the masters were recognised as a *universitas* or corporation in 1231. The students associated together on the basis of geographical origins, into two "nations", representing the North (including the Scots) and the South (including the Irish and the Welsh). In later centuries, geographical origins continued to influence many students' affiliations when membership of a college or hall became customary in Oxford.

Members of many religious orders, including Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Augustinians, settled in Oxford in the mid-13th century, gained influence, and maintained houses for students. At about the same time, private benefactors established colleges to serve as self-contained scholarly communities. Among the earliest such founders were William of Durham, who in 1249 endowed University College, and John Balliol, father of a future King of Scots: Balliol College bears his name. Another founder, Walter de Merton, a chancellor of England and afterwards Bishop of Rochester, devised a series of regulations for college life; Merton College thereby became the model for such establishments at Oxford, as well as at the University of Cambridge. Thereafter, an increasing number of students forsook living in halls and religious houses in favour of living in colleges.

In 1333-4 an attempt by some dissatisfied Oxford scholars to found a new university at Stamford, Lincolnshire was blocked by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge petitioning king Edward III. Thereafter until the 1820s no new universities were allowed to start in England even in London, and Oxford and Cambridge had a monopoly unusual in western European countries.

Renaissance period

The new learning of the Renaissance greatly influenced Oxford from the late 15th century onwards. Among university scholars of the period were William Grocyn, who contributed to the revival of Greek language studies, and John Colet, the noted biblical scholar. With the Reformation and the breaking of ties with the Roman Catholic Church, Recusant scholars from Oxford fled to continental Europe, settling especially at the University of Douai. The method of teaching at Oxford was transformed from the medieval Scholastic method to Renaissance education, although institutions associated with the university suffered losses of land and revenues. In 1636, Chancellor William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, codified the university's statutes; these to a large extent remained its governing regulations until the mid-19th century. Laud was also responsible for the granting of a charter securing privileges for the University Press, and he made significant contributions to the Bodleian Library, the main library of the university. From the inception of the Church of England until 1866 membership of the church was a requirement to receive the BA degree from Oxford, and "dissenters" were only permitted to receive the MA in 1871.

The university was a centre of the Royalist party during the English Civil War (1642–1649), while the town favoured the opposing Parliamentary cause. From the mid-18th century onwards, however, the University of Oxford took little part in political conflicts.

Modern period

The mid nineteenth century saw the impact of the Oxford Movement (1833–1845), led among others by the future Cardinal Newman. The influence of the reformed model of German university reached Oxford via key scholars such as Edward Bouverie Pusey, Benjamin Jowett and Max Müller.

The system of separate honour schools for different subjects began in 1802, with *Mathematics* and *Literae Humaniores*. Schools for *Natural*

Sciences and *Law*, and *Modern History* were added in 1853. By 1872 the latter was split into *Jurisprudence* and *Modern History*, and *Theology* was the sixth honour school. In addition to these BA Honours degrees, the post-graduate Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) was (and still is) offered.



Administrative reforms during the 19th century included the replacement of oral examinations with written entrance tests, greater tolerance for religious dissent, and the establishment of four women's colleges. Twentieth century Privy Council decisions (such as the abolition of compulsory daily worship, dissociation of the Regius professorship of Hebrew from clerical status, diversion of theological bequests to colleges to other purposes) loosened the link with traditional belief and practice. Although the University's emphasis traditionally had been on classical knowledge, its curriculum expanded in the course of the 19th century to encompass scientific and medical studies. Knowledge of Ancient Greek was required for admission until 1920, and Latin until 1960.

The mid twentieth century saw many distinguished continental scholars, displaced by Nazism and Communism, relocating to Oxford. ^[citation needed]

The list of distinguished scholars at the University of Oxford is long and includes many who have made major contributions to British politics, the sciences, medicine, and literature. More than forty Nobel laureates and more than fifty world leaders have been affiliated with the University of Oxford.

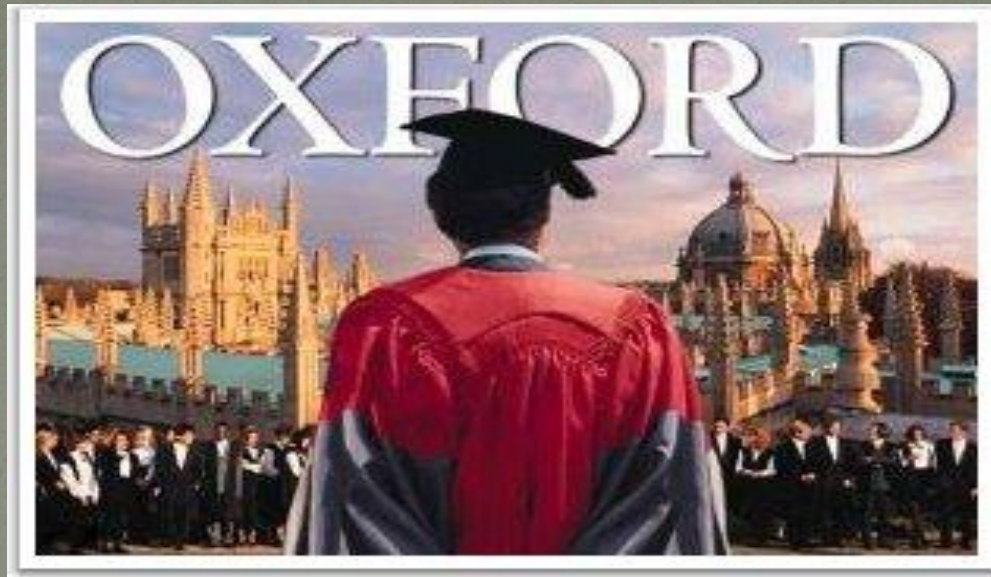
Women's education

The University passed a Statute in 1875 allowing its delegates to create examinations for women at roughly undergraduate level. The first four women's colleges were established thanks to the activism of the Association for Promoting the Higher Education of Women (AEW). Lady Margaret Hall (1878) was followed by Somerville College in 1879; the first 21 students from Somerville and Lady Margaret Hall attended lectures in rooms above an Oxford baker's shop. The first two colleges for women were followed by St Hugh's (1886), St Hilda's (1893) and St Anne's College (1952). Oxford was long considered a bastion of male privilege, and it was not until 7 October 1920 that women became eligible for admission as full members of the university and were given the right to take degrees.^[25] In 1927 the University's dons created a quota that limited the number of female students to a quarter that of men, a ruling which was not abolished until 1957. However, before the 1970s all Oxford colleges were for men or women only, so that the number of women was effectively limited by the capacity of the women's colleges to admit students. It was not until 1959 that the women's colleges were given full collegiate status.

In 1974 Brasenose, Jesus, Wadham, Hertford and St Catherine's became the first previously all-male colleges to admit women. In 2008 the last single sex college, St Hilda's, admitted its first men, meaning all colleges are now co-residential. By 1988, 40% of undergraduates at Oxford were female; the ratio is now about 48:52 in men's favour.

The detective novel *Gaudy Night* by Dorothy Sayers – herself one of the first women to gain an academic degree from Oxford – takes place in a (fictional) women's college at Oxford, and the issue of women's education is central to its plot.

Buildings, collections and facilities



Main Sites

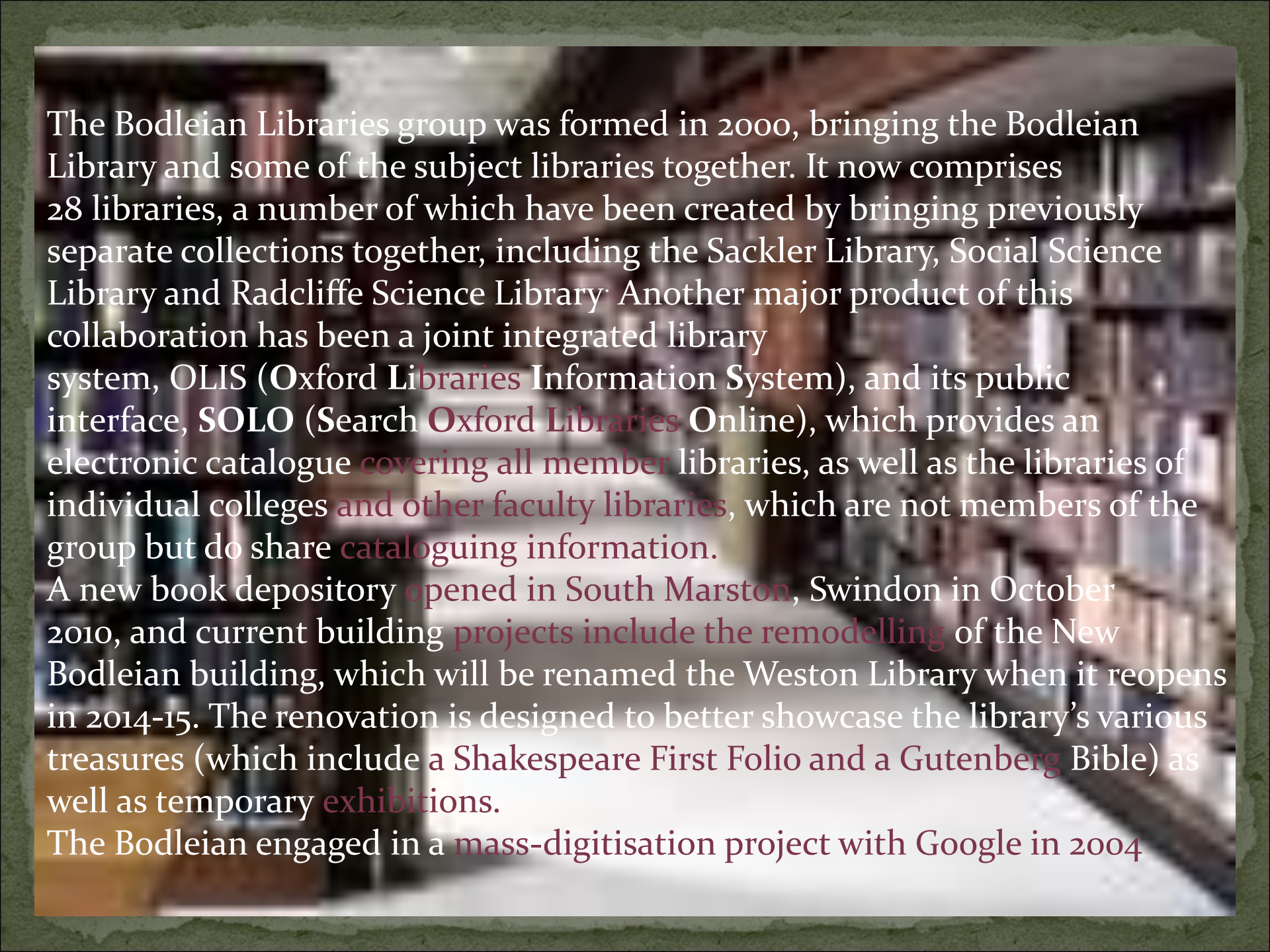
The University is a 'city university' in that it does not have a main campus. Instead colleges, departments, accommodation, and other facilities are scattered throughout the city centre. The Science Area, in which most science departments are located, is the area that bears closest resemblance to a campus. The ten acre Radcliffe Observatory Quarter in the northwest of the city is currently under development. However the larger colleges' sites are of similar size to these areas.

Iconic university buildings include the Sheldonian Theatre used for music concerts, lectures and university ceremonies and Examination Schools where examinations and some lectures take place. The University Church of St Mary the Virgin was used for university ceremonies before the construction of the Sheldonian. Christ Church Cathedral uniquely serves as both a college chapel and as a cathedral.

Libraries

The University maintains the largest university library system in the UK and with over 11 million volumes housed on 120 miles (190 km) of shelving the Bodleian group is the second-largest library in the UK, after the British Library. The Bodleian is a legal deposit library, which means that it is entitled to request a free copy of every book published in the UK. As such, its collection is growing at a rate of over three miles (five kilometres) of shelving every year.

The buildings referred to as the University's main research library The Bodleian consist of the original Bodleian Library in the Old Schools Quadrangle, founded by Sir Thomas Bodley in 1598 and opened in 1602, the Radcliffe Camera, the Clarendon Building, and the New Bodleian Building. A tunnel underneath Broad Street connects these buildings, with the Gladstone Link connecting the Old Bodleian and Radcliffe Camera opening to readers in 2011.



The Bodleian Libraries group was formed in 2000, bringing the Bodleian Library and some of the subject libraries together. It now comprises 28 libraries, a number of which have been created by bringing previously separate collections together, including the Sackler Library, Social Science Library and Radcliffe Science Library. Another major product of this collaboration has been a joint integrated library system, OLIS (Oxford Libraries Information System), and its public interface, SOLO (Search Oxford Libraries Online), which provides an electronic catalogue covering all member libraries, as well as the libraries of individual colleges and other faculty libraries, which are not members of the group but do share cataloguing information.

A new book depository opened in South Marston, Swindon in October 2010, and current building projects include the remodelling of the New Bodleian building, which will be renamed the Weston Library when it reopens in 2014-15. The renovation is designed to better showcase the library's various treasures (which include a Shakespeare First Folio and a Gutenberg Bible) as well as temporary exhibitions.

The Bodleian engaged in a mass-digitisation project with Google in 2004

Museums

Oxford maintains a number of museums and galleries, open for free to the public. The Ashmolean Museum, founded in 1683, is the oldest museum in the UK, and the oldest university museum in the world. It holds significant collections of art and archaeology, including works by Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Turner and Picasso, as well as treasures such as the Scorpion Macehead, the Parian Marble and the Alfred Jewel. It also contains "The Messiah", a pristine Stradivarius violin, regarded by some as one of the finest examples in existence. The Ashmolean reopened in November 2009, after a £49m redevelopment, doubling the display space as well as providing new facilities.

The Museum of Natural History holds the University's zoological, entomological and geological specimens. It is housed in a large neo-Gothic building on Parks Road, in the University's Science Area. Among its collection are the skeletons of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* and *triceratops*, and the most complete remains of a dodo found anywhere in the world. It also hosts the Simonyi Professorship of the Public Understanding of Science, currently held by Marcus du Sautoy.



Adjoining the Museum of Natural History is the Pitt Rivers Museum, founded in 1884, which displays the University's archaeological and anthropological collections, currently holding over 500,000 items. It recently built a new research annexe; its staff have been involved with the teaching of anthropology at Oxford since its foundation, when as part of his donation General Augustus Pitt Rivers stipulated that the University establish a lectureship in anthropology.

The Museum of the History of Science is housed on Broad St in the world's oldest-surviving purpose-built museum building. It contains 15,000 artefacts, from antiquity to the 20th century, representing almost all aspects of the history of science. In the Faculty of Music on St Aldate's is the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, a collection mostly of instruments from Western classical music, from the medieval period onwards. Christ Church Picture Gallery holds a collection of over 200 old master paintings.

Parks

The University Parks are a 70 acre parkland area in the northeast of city. It is open free of charge to the public during daylight hours. As well as providing beautiful gardens and rare and exotic plants, the parks contains numerous sports fields, used for official and unofficial fixtures.

The Botanic Garden on the High Street is the oldest botanic garden in the UK and the third-oldest scientific garden in the world. It contains over 8,000 different plant species on 1.8 4½ acres. It is one of the most diverse yet compact collections of plants in the world and includes representatives from over 90% of the higher plant families. The Harcourt Arboretum is a 130 acre site six miles south of the city that includes native woodland and 67 acres of meadow. The 1000 acre Wytham Woods are owned by the University and used or research in zoology and climate change.

There are also various collegiate owned open spaces open to the public, most notably Christ Church Meadow.

Oxford in literature and other media



Oxford University is the setting for numerous works of fiction. Oxford was mentioned in fiction as early as 1400 when [Chaucer](#) in his [Canterbury Tales](#) referred to a "Clerk [student] of Oxenford": "For him was levere have at his beddes heed/ Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,/ of Aristotle and his philosophie/ Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie". As of 1989, 533 Oxford-based novels had been identified, and the number continues to rise.^[155] Famous literary works range from [Brideshead Revisited](#), by [Evelyn Waugh](#), to the trilogy [His Dark Materials](#) by [Philip Pullman](#), which features an alternate-reality version of the University. Sir Humphrey Appleby, GCB, KBE, MVO, MA (Oxon) attended the fictional Baillie College in [Yes Minister](#), and *The Complete Yes Minister* book's introduction, dated September 2019, was written from the equally fictitious Hacker College.

Thank you
for your
attention

