It’s National Library Week!

Well, technically National Library Week doesn’t begin until tomorrow, but we’re allowed to announce it early, right?

From April 10 to April 16, libraries around the country will celebrate National Library Week, a holiday created by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1958. According to their website, “it is a time to celebrate the contributions of our nation’s libraries and librarians and to promote library use and support.”

This year, the theme of the week is “Libraries Transform.” Just as the caterpillar and butterflies in the advertisement symbolize a metamorphosis from childhood to maturity, so too do libraries work to transform young minds into adulthood, where academic study can truly flourish. RML is no different; it is our sincere hope that all that we do, from one-on-one assistance with papers to this newsletter, helps you on your road to becoming holistic priests.

So what is RML doing to celebrate National Library Week? First, we are holding a contest through the entire month of April; an advertising for it can be found on the last page of this newsletter. Second, we have created a display of favorite books chosen by the faculty of SCS, located by the circulation desk. And last, we will continue to do what we do every day—provide you, the students, with all the assistance you need to be better researchers, and thus, better people. Come celebrate with us!

The theme of this year’s National Library Week is “Libraries Transform.” While an article in this newsletter recalls a moment of decisive transformation in RML’s own history—the renovation it underwent, which will mark its ten-year passing this fall—the ALA’s tagline emphasizes the library’s mission to transform the lives of its patrons.

Various activities can be proposed as to how it does this: “providing free access to technology, career development resources and the skills to help people thrive in the digital age,” as the event’s poster states. All laudable endeavors, of course, but surely inadequate to the dignity of libraries if the description ends there.

In RML’s case, our patrons are in need not so much of career-counseling as immersion in the thought and wisdom of the Church. No matter how libraries change in the coming years, no matter how fast rising or heretofore undreamed-of media proliferate over the next decades, RML will always remain committed to maintaining our students’ links to the written words of the saints and theologians.
Visitors to RML frequently remark on its appearance, usually with a variation on the line, “This is one of the nicest-looking libraries I’ve ever been in.” I usually reply to their tributes with, “If you only knew…”

As the years roll past, fewer and fewer at RML can say that they remember what the pre-renovation RML looked like. The last class of seminarians who were enrolled before the library changed its appearance were ordained in 2012. Nowadays, when I find myself describing how the library “used to look” to some unknowing visitors, I reach a point where I can only say something along the line of, “But no amount of describing in words will make you envision it. You’d have to have seen it as it was, back in the day, with lime green paint peeling off the walls, overstuffed shelves placed in such close proximity that the main reading room resembled the interior of a submarine and a darkened gymnasium below with a rickety track suspended from the ceiling.”

This fall, the Library will commemorate ten years of its new, revitalized self. Patrons who only know the sparkling-white interiors, long sun-flooded windows and spacious layout might be surprised to see the cosmetic work that went into scrubbing and reshaping the façade. On this anniversary, we thought it would be nice to republish some of the photographs of the library as it looked during the renovation (circa 2005-2006). You’ll see hard-hatted librarians, some exposed wiring, a few bulldozed walls, the debris-strewn carpet and lots of empty shelves. These photos may give you some sense, however faint, of the need for such a massive undertaking, as well as enable you to see where vestiges of the old library persist into the new.

Our much-improved appearance was the result of hundreds of hours of planning meetings, architectural drafting, décor selections, grant-submission-writing, fundraisers and administrative wrangling followed by nearly a year devoted to the physical construction. The stages of the project meant that sometimes we had to pack up and move upstairs or downstairs, depending on what was completed; it also meant that much of our collection was in storage during that time.

Nevertheless, we at RML are grateful for everything the renovation gave us—brighter interiors, better patron accommodations and above all the increased floor space, without which even determined scholars may have found their minds clouding over from lack of breathing-room.
RML finishes weeding the collection

(written by Chelsea Post)

On Friday, Apr. 1, the staff of RML completed the long, arduous task of determining which books would stay a part of the library after the lower level is replaced with the cafeteria.

“We had already gone through quite a bit of the collection last summer, and that was all well and good,” James Humble, Library Director, said. “But we decided to go even further and narrow down the collection to only the most necessary of books.”

Those lucky books—approximately twenty—now fit snugly in a 16x12 cardboard box kept behind the circulation desk. One book on each subject pertaining to the entire world’s knowledge was kept… with the exception of a Bible.

“Everyone has their own copy of the Catholic Study Bible,” Mr. Humble said. “Or they can find a copy online. We only have a limited amount of space, so we had to be picky.”

The Book Box, as it has been labeled, is not only home to the circulating collection, but also the librarians as well.

“Our offices are being turned into game rooms, for pool and bowling,” Mr. Juan De Jesus, Interlibrary Loan librarian, said. “So we have to take turns working out of the box, and it gets really cramped sometimes.”

What will happen to the rest of the library floor space? RML is proud to announce the introduction of a café and seminary lounge where the periodicals are located, and an entire wing of computers where the Reference section currently resides. The Main Stacks room will become a gym space, as we go back to our roots and install an elevated track and a small swimming pool for laps.

“After eating all of that food downstairs, you’ll need to work it off,” Mr. De Jesus said. “Just try not to get the books too wet, since we only have one copy of each.”

The lucky books that made it into the box. Some example titles include The Purpose-Driven Life and The Lord of the Rings.
“Confession time: I don’t read as much as I used to. An odd statement, since it seems that a prerequisite of being a librarian is the ability to read a lot and often, but the sad truth is that time has escaped me, leaving me with a large collection of unread books. However, The Well-Educated Mind: A Guide to the Classical Education You Never Had (Z1003 .B324 2003) could help me regain that lost time and make up some ground. Bauer spends the majority of the book going through five genres of literature—fiction, memoir, historical, drama and poetry—and explaining how to read them intelligently. The beginning of the book, however, gives tips on the act of reading and what ‘digesting a book’ looks like in today’s era, whether on a screen or in a hardcover. The strategies remain the same, no matter the medium, and this book makes a strong case on the importance of understanding the written word.”

“With summertime just months away, the Hollywood machine is surely to blast the senses of movie audiences with enough action films to fill a stadium. And as usual, the commercialization or, maybe, the propaganda for the Center Intelligence Agency, better known as the CIA, will be an important part of some of the movie plots, whether on the good side, the bad side or the in-between side, with enough plot twists and turns that’ll make you wander, Who are these guys? Where they came from? Who started it all?

The Shadow Warriors: O.S.S. and the origins of the C.I.A. (D810 .S7 S554) aims to answer these questions by digging through the history of the O.S.S. (Office of Strategic Services), the predecessor of the CIA, and their world of intrigue and controversy. Read about its founder “Wild Bill” Donovan, his shadow warfare missions and many other topics of “secret intelligence” interest.”

- JDJ

WHO WOULD WIN: AUGUSTINE OR AQUINAS?
YOU DECIDE!

April Madness: Philosophers vs. Theologians Bracket

Until May 6

* Every vote you make gives you a chance for a prize! *

This month saw RML receive a number of books back from the bindery—and below are just three of the great books now available to be checked out:


Fifty years after Vatican II, there is still much to be gleaned from its teachings. In this book, the author compares the council to an “unfinished building,” one that has the columns in place but is missing “the dome.” And while Pope Francis has contributed to the dome, Gaillardetz asserts that it is the duty of all Catholics to finish the job and seek reform in the Church.

- Paul and His Recent Interpreters, by N. T. Wright (BS2651 .W75 2015)

N. T. Wright has written a number of books about Paul, but this latest book takes great pains to critique the interpretations of the last fifty years. The author charges through ten different models of thought, holding a magnifying glass to their contributions on Paul.


Constantine made the cross his imperial sign in the fourth century—but was the cross used as a symbol for Christianity before Constantine? Longenecker proposes that it was, in a myriad of ways, and he goes through several different types of artifacts over the course of this book.