

TIPS ON BOOKS AND LIBRARIES, FOR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

1. These notes are written principally for undergraduates starting out in their first year of the English course at Caius, though they may have a use for students at a later stage, as a reminder. Since books are fundamental tools of the trade for students of the humanities, now is the time to begin to think more professionally about them and their uses. At some later stage some of you may become interested in the history of books and book production, and some of you will go on to write books of your own. Remember meanwhile that supervisors and library staff are expert about books and are always willing to discuss queries, practical or abstruse.
2. There are three echelons or levels of provision of books to assist you in reading and study for your Cambridge English course, and at different stages and for different purposes you will need to use all of them; it makes sense, therefore, to find your way about in the library system right at the start, and to learn how find what you need.
3. The first level of provision is the College Library, which is available for use only by members of the College. Caius is fortunate in now having a modernised and well-equipped Library, housed in the Cockerell Building located just across Senate House Passage from Caius Court and operated by a skilled team of professional staff. Also an important part of the Library, and of the College's earlier history, is a large collection of early printed books and manuscripts, which you will be encouraged to visit when you have settled in. You will receive in your startup pack a copy of the Library Booklet for the new academic year, which explains the full detail of all aspects of the Library's arrangement and function. Also included with the Booklet will be a note advertising introductory tours for new arrivals, and you are strongly advised to attend one of these tours.
4. The Reading Room in the upper part of the Cockerell Building which contains the Working Library books and journals is equipped with computer network connections at each workplace; this means that you can bring in a laptop unit and, so long as you do not disturb other users, you can connect up to various network facilities which the Library staff will be happy to explain. The Library has also provided access via the Caius College network to its collection of materials held on CD-ROM; once you have a personal ID allowing you to login to this network, you can call up these materials from any appropriately connected terminal and can download from them. There also certain online journals which can be accessed in the same way.
5. At the introductory tours, staff will explain the organisation of the bookstock, the use of the electronic catalogues, and the operation of the borrowing system, among other aspects, and they will also explain that the Enquiry Desk is regularly staffed by professionals ready to help with any query or problem that you may have. Understand how this Library works, how to locate and take out books on loan, how to find information and what services are available to you, because you will use it intensively over the span of your three years, as a place in which to work and study as well as a

storehouse of books that you will consult and borrow. In particular, the Caius integrated catalogue system (Voyager) is used very widely elsewhere within the university, so that learning how it functions will prove a shrewd investment.

6. In particular, from a base in the Caius Library you can learn how to operate through its computer terminals the online Union Catalogue (Newton), which allows you to identify and locate books held at Caius and also copies held by the central University Library and by the other Faculty and Department libraries within the larger system. You will also in due course learn that the Caius Library catalogue can be consulted not only within the Caius Library building itself, but from anywhere else within the Cambridge computer network system.

7. There are also other libraries within Caius, including the Record Library and the Performing Scores Library, which are administered by the Caius Musical Society; officers of the Society will explain their use on request. Likewise the Dean can give information about the small Chapel Library. Certain Directors of Studies sometimes hold copies of basic textbooks which can be borrowed. The College Library itself contains a special reserve collection organised for use by medical students and certain natural scientists; this is the Locked Case collection and its use is fully explained in the Library Booklet.

8. The second level of provision that you will need is represented principally by the English Faculty Library, which is situated on the Sidgwick Avenue Site, in the Raised Faculty Building near to the Lecture Block, and which is available for use by all members of the Faculty. Initial admission to this Library, for registration purposes, is by means of a University Library Reader's Ticket, which will be prepared for you automatically and which should reach you in time for the start of term.

9. This Library aims to contain nearly all publications required for the study of English literature and language, as well as many aspects of world literature and related topics over a very broad range; its collections include recorded and video materials, and many often-used books are held in multiple copies. Within the Library are also held the specialised collections comprising the Library of the Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic (ASNC) Department. The catalogue is also held in online electronic form; it too can be consulted from within the Library, or from anywhere else within the Cambridge computer network system.

10. The Faculty Library also holds stocks of all English Faculty and ASNC reading lists and information concerning the Faculty's and Department's teaching programmes; it is a borrowing collection and it also provides places for reading and study (apart from during the forthcoming period of major refurbishment, for which special arrangements will apply). The Faculty Library also arranges introductory tours and your director of studies will inform you of the date and time set for your group; it is highly important that you should not miss this opportunity. All the English Faculty's current reading lists should also be available from the Faculty website, and they can be downloaded and saved for reference in that form.

11. The third level of provision is represented by the University Library. This is a national Copyright Library, of synoptic coverage both of books and periodicals in all languages and from all over the world in modern times, which also holds invaluable collections of earlier printed books and manuscripts fundamental to advanced study. New undergraduates are admitted to this Library for reading and study but not for borrowing. Once again the modern catalogue is held in electronic form, and once again it may be consulted from within the Library or from anywhere else within the Cambridge computer network system. There are booklets available within the Library explaining all aspects of its function, and early in your first term you need to set aside time to make a first visit and work out the basics of what is a grand and complex institution.

12. In particular, remember that, once you hold a reader's ticket, virtually no materials held within the University Library's many collections are withheld from you. This means that you can inspect first editions of the great works of literature which you come to study, in their original form and appearance, and use any part of the Library's elaborate reference services. Most of the world's scholarly journals are held in complete runs, and at modest cost you can commission photocopies of individual articles for use in private study. There is also a full range of material held on CD-ROM and accessible in other electronic formats (but see note on some dangers, below).

13. These three levels of provision are specific at levels one and three; but at level two there is wider choice. All faculties and departments maintain their own libraries, and for special projects you may apply for permission to use any of them. There is a Library within the Fitzwilliam Museum, and also within the University's modern art collection at Kettle's Yard. The Whipple Library is located within the the Department of the History and Philosophy of Science; the Pendlebury Library is located within the Faculty of Music. Our own College Library staff will be happy to advise you about other special library collections and how they might be useful to you.

14. During vacations when you return home you may wish to continue reading and study within a library near you, perhaps a college or university library which is close enough for practical purposes. Most such libraries will admit you on a temporary non-borrowing basis, and the Caius Library staff can provide on request a card of introduction which will attest to your student status and smooth your path. Remember to ask for this in good time before the end of term.

15. As students of a major reading subject in the humanities you will also build up your own library of texts and reference works, which mostly you will keep here in Cambridge. Remember that if you want advice in the choice of texts or editions available to you, your director of studies or supervisors will give you guidance, bearing in mind price and ready availability as well as other factors. Don't hesitate to ask before you spend, since books are an expensive investment. Paperback texts are cheap to buy and will ease the strain on a tight budget, but the hardback version will last longer and will not fall to pieces through heavy use. Think twice before you buy a selected poems or anthology of excerpts, since sometimes the texts may be silently shortened, and the selection criteria (admitted or not) may come to annoy you. Bear in

mind that the College makes available to undergraduates an annual Book Grant which will re-imburse you for the cost of books purchased for study, up to a modest maximum sum; information and application forms are available from your director of studies (see 'Tips on Book Grants').

16. There are many bookshops in Cambridge, holding stocks of new publications and also secondhand and antiquarian books; also there are flourishing bookstalls forming part of the Cambridge market out in the Market Square. If you are comfortable with internet commerce, there are bargain prices to be found there, and fast delivery times. Some booksellers, e.g. the upstairs section of Galloway and Porter in Sidney Street, keep an extensive stock of academic books at reduced or discount prices, and if you need to purchase an expensive text or reference book it is worth checking around before you pay the full retail mark-up. Secondhand copies of texts in older versions that you will be using during your course may be offered quite cheaply, but remember that for serious study an up-to-date modern edition with good notes and commentary is likely to be an essential requisite; however, if a particular book that has gone out of print is one that you particularly desire, there are methods available for searching for out-of-print books on which the College Library staff will be happy to advise. Remember too that borrowing and lending one other's books is a feature of a civilised community, but civility depends on not forgetting the courtesy of prompt return. As you build up your own collection of books, look after them well if you want them to last; don't mend them with sellotape or equivalent, because the adhesive will leach into the paper and as time passes will cause irreversible damage. If you acquire early historic editions and need advice about repairs the College Library employs a professional binder and conservator, and the Library staff will be pleased to take you down to his workshop.

17. Remember, as a responsible library user please don't write in library books, or mark them, or turn down pages to keep your place; these are the habits of the library lout. Don't borrow more books than you need and can use, and be sure to return them promptly, which will give other users a fair chance when time is so short from week to week. Remember too that if your supervisor or a lecturer gives you a reading list that includes books not in the College Library, you can shew the list to one of the Library staff, who will make an immediate photocopy so that a check can be run and books that we don't have can be considered for addition to stock. In these ways you can help yourself by helping others. If there is a particular book which you need but which you cannot locate, you can make recommendations to the College Library and it may be possible to make an accelerated acquisition, sending you a message when the book arrives and reserving it for your use.

18. As you become more experienced in using catalogues and sources of information and reference you will find your own way around common problems. For example, if you cannot locate a modern annotated edition of a minor text, some parts of that corpus may be included in a modern anthology, with excellent notes. If you are directed to consult a scholarly journal, you will need to learn how to locate a run of the journal in question, covering the period that you need; library staff will assist you. Many standard works of reference will be of constant use in your studies: language dictionaries, the big

Oxford English Dictionary, the facsimiles of the Shakespeare quartos and folios; you will soon learn where these are located in the libraries that you regularly use, so that you can go straight to them when needed. Don't forget too that while browsing around aimlessly amongst collections of books can fritter away time, sometimes you may chance upon a book in a library or bookshop which turns out to be a real find.

19. A side-word here about the new resources of internet database text collections and their use as materials for study. If you are computer literate it is often possible to locate extensive presentations of literary source texts by means of a search engine online or via a database with its own internal indexes, and to download such material into your own files and then print out from them. But there are often serious hidden dangers. Texts stored online are frequently derived from old and superseded editions because of the restrictions imposed by copyright laws, and rather frequently a body of text material may be marred by repeated errors of transcription or scanning technology. Mostly the exact source and date of such online database material are not cited, nor the name and status of the scholar (if any) vouching for the editorial choices made in the selection of text versions. Rather often, even files that purport to give you the precise old-spelling text of a specified historical edition do no such thing, having been tampered with or simply not been checked closely so as to deliver the promised fidelity to an original. In almost every case a carefully edited modern printed text, presented and justified by a dependable scholarly editor, is safer (and more productive) to use than an anonymous database counterpart; the more so because different texts can represent instructive differences of editorial aim and method, quite as much as the difference between the accurate and the slipshod. Learn to make use of these new media, but also to be informed and critical about them.

20. A final point. There is a well-stocked central Library which is the municipal provision for Cambridge citizens, including many schoolchildren and adult learners; and as you are now Cambridge residents you are eligible to make use of this service. But keep in mind that you have very many opportunities elsewhere that are not open to civic users, and try not to add pressure on the use of Cambridge's own public Library unless you have special reason (for instance, in following up matters of local history).

J.H. Prynne
Director of Studies in English

Gonville and Caius College,
27th February 2003