



CARMELITE LIBRARY OF SPIRITUALITY

The 140-year-old Carmelite Library at Middle Park is Australia's finest specialised collection in Christian spirituality and mysticism. It has been called "a national treasure".

Well over a century in the making, it is dedicated to documenting "the love of learning and the desire for God" at the very heart of Western civilisation. It is undoubtedly the most significant such collection in our region, and probably in the Southern Hemisphere. Its specialised holdings allow it to provide resources for exploring the contribution of Christian spirituality to the shaping of the West which are often significantly under-represented in secular collections.

The Library's focused collection policy has produced a deep and broad coverage of classic European sacred literature and art, from all periods and major languages. Convinced of the perennial value of the spiritual classics which are the centre of its collection, the Library has stuck steadfastly to a traditional policy, and in its breadth, depth and stability provide a unique resource, whether for the researcher at doctoral level or the reader in search of food for thought.

The Library, open to the public, is owned and operated by the Carmelite Friars, an institution with more than eight hundred years of continuous history and a long-term commitment to forms of education which encompass the aims of intellectual knowledge, formation for service, and the search for personal wisdom.

In order to sustain and develop its collection at its present level of excellence the Library is now exploring options to ensure that it remains at the service of current and future generations.

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A unique resource

In recent years there has been unprecedented interest in spirituality in the Australian community, but often in ways and language detached from the classic spiritual traditions foundational to Western thought and culture.

The Carmelite Library is an especially rich collection of books, journals and research materials in this area, concentrating on Christian spirituality and mysticism, but also exploring connections to other spiritual traditions. Accessibly located in the heritage Carmelite Hall (1918) in Middle Park, the Carmelite Friars hope the Library will be a centre for academic study of spirituality and mysticism, spiritual enrichment, and inter-faith understanding.

Although the Carmelites always welcomed visitors to their library, in practice for most of its history it was a hidden monastic treasure. Over the last 30 years we have intentionally invested to allow this splendid collection to achieve its full potential as a unique national resource.

We want it to be a library for everyone interested in the spiritual journey and the “wisdom of the elders”: for scholars working on major research projects, students of spirituality, members of the community in search of the wisdom of the ages, and those seeking understanding between religions. We host meetings, seminars, lectures, and conversations in areas related to the great spiritual traditions represented in the Library’s collection.

Something of its history and the nature of the collection is told in the following pages. There is nothing quite like it elsewhere in Australia, so that it holds a unique place in the distributed national collection.

The Carmelites are convinced that to maintain a library such as this is a vote of confidence in our spiritual tradition and an act of hope for our spiritual future. We have a vision of excellence for the Library as a treasure house of spiritual wisdom.



The Carmelites

Carmelites are members of an international Catholic order of friars with a continuous institutional and spiritual tradition spanning eight centuries and long commitments to scholarship, learning, education, and patronage of the arts.

The Order originated in the 1190s in a group of hermits living by the “spring of Elijah” on Mount Carmel in Crusader Palestine. Between 1206 and 1214 they obtained a rule of life from Saint Albert of Vercelli, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and some decades later began founding houses in Europe. By 1247 they had joined the thriving mendicant or friar movement, adding preaching and pastoral care to their contemplative tradition. Their patron, the Virgin Mary, and their place of origin, give them their official name, Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel; in England they were popularly called White Friars. Today more than 50,000 friars, nuns, sisters and lay Carmelites around the world continue in the same spiritual lineage.

In the course of the centuries the Order has produced many great theologians, mystics and spiritual writers, and the Carmelite school of spirituality is one of the most significant Christian spiritual traditions. Its greatest representatives are the 16th-century mystical writers Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross. It continues to the present in modern teachers such as Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, recently declared a Doctor of the Church, and the World War II martyrs Saint Edith Stein and Blessed Titus Brandsma, as well as in a host of contemporary authors and scholars.

The Carmelite friars arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1881, and settled at Gawler outside Adelaide, expanding the following year to the Melbourne parish of Sandridge (which stretched from Port Melbourne to St Kilda). They devoted themselves to preaching and parish ministry, and later to educational and other tasks.

Among other things they developed a library. It now comprises over 55,000 volumes and is open to all interested users. Over the years, it has become a collection unique in Australia and in our region.



The Carmelite Library: origins

When the Carmelites first arrived here in 1881, they brought the nucleus of today's Carmelite Library with them. When they established their first purpose-built priory in Albert Park in 1886, it incorporated a library among the public rooms of the house.

Most of their books seem to have been practical aids to their pastoral ministry, but even some of these were already venerable items. Among these treasures were the *Ceremoniale* of 1616, which guided the priest through the intricacies of celebrating Mass according to the Order's ancient Rite of the Holy Sepulchre, which dates to the time of the Crusades. There were also the Carmelite *Constitutions* of 1625, then still in force, and some 18th-century liturgical books.

They also brought with them the 1606 edition of Maldonati's highly-regarded Latin commentary on the four gospels, and Antonio Martini's 23-volume Italian commentary on the whole Bible, in the edition of 1784-88; both of these were then still commonly used for sermon preparation.

It is also from this time that the Library has Daniel of the Virgin Mary's *Vinea Carmeli* (1662), a collection of documents and treatises about the history and spirituality of the Order, and the three-volume 1757 folio edition of the *Doctrinale* of the English Carmelite theologian Thomas Netter (†1430), once barely known but increasingly considered the most important theologian of the fifteenth century.

From these beginnings the present Library slowly took shape.



The Library takes shape

In 1928 the Carmelites decided to train their Australian novices and students in Melbourne rather than send them to Ireland. From this time an academic library began to develop at Whitefriars House of Studies, which was first in Kew and from 1937 in Donvale.

Naturally the library collection included the textbooks and other works which were required by the students and their professors across the broad philosophical and theological range of the seminary curriculum. The collection also reflected the particular characteristics of the Order and its long spiritual tradition.

From 1955 Fr Brian Pitman was librarian. His wide-ranging theological interests and astute buying made the Library, despite its comparatively modest size, a particularly well-chosen collection, with special strengths in scripture, systematic theology, and increasingly in spirituality. As in most monastic libraries, there was also a considerable eclectic element, reflecting the varied interests of the community over the years. In recent times it has been further enriched by donations of scarce items, especially from other Carmelite libraries overseas and from religious communities at home.

By the '80s financial pressures, the development of new theological centres, and the Order's changing educational strategy suggested a change of policy and a more specialised vision.



A new policy: a specialised collection

On reflection, it appeared to the Carmelites that specialisation would make their Library a more significant theological and cultural resource for the community in Melbourne and beyond, and allow inevitably limited financial resources to produce the maximum benefit. Although the Library had always been open to the public, in fact it was largely a hidden monastic treasure. It was decided its particular riches should be built upon and made more available to interested readers and researchers.

Therefore, in 1990 we discontinued collecting across the whole range of theological disciplines and concentrated on three areas closely associated with the life and spirit of the Order, which were not covered in depth elsewhere in the country. These are:

- Carmelitana: all aspects of the life, history, and spiritual tradition of the Order;
- Spirituality: the Christian spiritual and mystical tradition, both historical and contemporary, and its links to other world spiritual traditions;
- Mariology: the theological study of the Virgin Mary.

Our logo is a detail showing the prophet Elisha taken from the title page of Alegre de Casanate's *Paradisus Carmelitici decoris* (Lyon, 1639), in the Library's Rare Book Collection, which features the prophets Elijah and Elisha, traditional patrons of the Carmelite Order. Casanate's work, with its extravagant claims for the Order's historical descent from the time of the Old Testament prophets, caused such heated controversy among contemporary historians that it was banned by the Spanish Inquisition and has become a rarity.



Our specialised collecting areas (1): Carmelitana

Our first priority is the collection of resources for study of the life, history and spiritual tradition of the Carmelite Order. Our aim has been to develop this collection to the highest scholarly standards, in the principal languages of scholarship, allowing research to doctoral and publication level on all aspects of the Carmelite tradition, and also to provide a comprehensive collection of devotional and spiritual works for the ordinary reader.

The Carmelite spiritual and mystical tradition has been enormously influential and the Carmelitana collection includes notable research holdings on Saints Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi, Thérèse of Lisieux, Edith Stein, and Elizabeth of the Trinity. There are also extensive holdings on lesser-known Carmelite spiritual writers, like Louise de la Vallière (†1710), once the mistress of King Louis XIV and then a Carmelite nun, who wrote on the mercy of God; or Lawrence of the Resurrection (†1691), whose spiritual way was to live in constant awareness of the presence of God; or Titus Brandsma (†1942) martyred in Dachau, “a mystic with a monthly rail pass”, as one of his friends called him.

There are particularly fine bibliographical aids for research on any Carmelite theme. The Library subscribes to all scholarly Carmelite periodicals and has standing orders for all significant Carmelite series. Over 70% of our journal titles in this area are unique in the distributed national collection.

Monographs and periodicals are collected in the principal European languages, and there are some holdings also in Portuguese, Danish, Maltese, and other languages. There are also significant items in the Rare Book Collection (see below), a collection of CD recordings of music by Carmelite musicians, and a large collection of cassettes by Carmelite speakers on spiritual and theological topics.

The Carmelitana collection is one of the three or four finest such collections in the world.



Our specialised collecting areas (2): Spirituality

Spirituality and mysticism are presently of widespread interest in the community, but often unanchored in the profound and powerful traditions of our heritage. We have nationally important holdings on Christian mysticism and on the history of spirituality, a uniquely rich collection of classic spiritual writings from across the centuries, and representative holdings on Jewish, Buddhist, Islamic and other spiritual traditions.

As well as material for specialists and scholars, the Library includes a very large collection of devotional material, including prayer-books, meditations, retreats, guides to prayer, personal development, and other works destined for spiritual reading. Special attention is being given to the collection and retention of older devotional works, including meditations and prayer-books, which document the traditional piety and practices of the Catholic community, a literature now becoming surprisingly scarce. This collection area also includes extensive material on hagiography, lives of saints, and Christian biography.

There is a large collection of monographs on monastic and religious life, which provides a significant resource also for the history of religious women. This part of the collection has been extensively developed through our project “Bibliographical Heritage of Religious Institutes”, which offers the Library as a repository for works representing the spiritual traditions of religious congregations, otherwise often difficult to access or in imminent danger of loss.

We collect in the major languages of scholarship, including the most important periodicals in various languages. About half of our journal holdings in this area is unique nationally.

It has been said that no one in Melbourne can now do serious study in the spirituality area without visiting the Carmelite Library.



Our specialised collecting areas (3): Mariology

Devotion to the Mother of the Lord has always been a characteristic feature of Catholic life and piety. Today there is a revival of interest in Mary, both devotional and scholarly. Recent works from various perspectives include theological, historical and ecumenical studies, and works informed by liberation theology, psychoanalytic and feminist approaches, cultural anthropology, and so on.

The Carmelite Library includes Australia's largest holding of monograph and periodical literature on the Virgin Mary, to whom the Order is especially dedicated. We subscribe to the six current scholarly journals in Mariology, and to the best of our knowledge are the only library in the country to hold more than one of them. In this area the Library again provides a unique national resource.

The general theological areas of the collection (philosophy, scripture, systematic and moral theology, church history, etc.) are no longer being systematically expanded but continue to be available. They remain a valuable resource for adult learning and general theological reflection.



Rare book collection

The Rare Book Collection is unusually large for a library of our size and has featured in the program “The Spirit of Things” on Radio National. It includes about 750 pre-1800 titles, most of them with a Carmelite connection. The oldest book, a controversial work against Lutheranism by the Italian Carmelite Giovanni Maria Verrato, dates from 1538; we also hold the second edition of 1544.

Among items of special interest or importance are the 1748 Italian edition of the works of John of the Cross, with its sixty fine engravings, the most extensive iconographical cycle on this saint, and the 1635 Spanish edition of his works.

We also hold the 1600 edition of the monumental commentary on the Psalms by the learned Italian Carmelite Michael Aiguani (†1400); the rare history of the Discalced Reform by its official historian Francisco de Santa María (†1644); and the life of the blind Carmelite mystic John of Saint Samson by his confrere Donatien of Saint Nicholas (†1651). There are especially fine holdings on the great mystic, the ecstatic Carmelite nun St Mary Magdalen de’ Pazzi (†1607), including several editions of her works and of the biography by her confessor and first editor, Vincenzo Puccini (1639, 1652, 1716, 1739, 1754).

We also have a copy of the famous “Breeches Bible” of 1610, ridiculed for its rendering of Genesis 3.7: “and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed figge tree leaves together and made themselves breeches”. Among many other treasures are Speed’s *History of Great Britaine* (1611); Lobo’s 1627 biography of the “holy Constable”, Saint Nuno Alvares Pereira, Carmelite and national hero of Portugal; and, a more recent rarity (1932), the scarce seven volumes of the collected works of the Carmelite Poul Helgesen (Paulus Helie), the father of Renaissance humanism in Denmark.



Special projects (1): Bibliographical Heritage of Religious Institutes

For generations Catholic religious congregations of priests, brothers and nuns have played an important part in the cultural, educational, spiritual and social life of the entire Australian community, in areas as diverse as education, social welfare, health care, and overseas aid. Today many of these congregations are in decline and experiencing changes which, among other consequences, are having a drastic impact on the nation's bibliographical heritage. Many communities have relocated from large institutions to smaller and more domestic housing, and already many unique and long-established libraries have been lost or irretrievably dispersed.

Through our project "Bibliographical Heritage of Religious Institutes" the Carmelite Library has made an urgent effort to provide a repository for books representing the historic traditions of religious congregations.

Numerous significant donations have greatly enhanced our holdings. We are convinced that these are of significance not only for their theological and religious content, but also from many other perspectives of broad interest in the community: for example, the history of education, of women and of children, and the sociology of particular spiritual, cultural, and religious outlooks and customs.

Special projects (2): Australian Indigenous Spirituality

A grant from the Toyota Community Foundation and Port Philip Council and a matching grant from the Carmelites have enabled the Library to develop a significant collection in Australian Indigenous Spirituality, and our conservative policy on deselection means that these resources will remain permanently accessible.



“No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions” (Hans Küng).

Inter-faith dialogue has assumed a special importance in today's world. We plan to offer the Library as a centre for religious dialogue, especially on the level of the spiritual search at the heart of all religions.

Special projects (3): Inter-faith dialogue

We hope, as funds allow, to build on our already select holdings on the spiritual and mystical traditions of the world religions. A grant from Port Philip Council has been of help in building these resources for community understanding and encounter.



Librarian

The Director of the Library is Revd Dr Paul Chandler, OCarm., FRHistS. A medievalist and church historian with a specialisation in spirituality, he holds degrees in history, systematic theology, Latin, and a doctorate in medieval studies from the University of Toronto. His academic training, linguistic skills (he reads eight languages), and international connections mean that he is particularly well placed to oversee this significant collection.

As Librarian we are fortunate to have the professional services of Mr Philip Harvey, who has a long and distinguished record in Australian theological librarianship. He is assisted by Ms Susan Southall, Assistant Librarian.

Connections

We are an associated library of Yarra Theological Union in Box Hill, and of the University of Divinity, Australia's largest ecumenical degree-granting body. The library is also a member of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association.

We have close contacts with Carmelite research institutes and libraries around the world, especially the Institutum Carmelitanum in Rome, the Carmelitana Collection in Washington DC, and the Nederlands Carmelitaans Instituut in Boxmeer.

Access

Hospitality is our policy. The Library is open to all interested users and we are delighted to provide whatever assistance we can to readers and borrowers, especially those engaged in scholarly projects. Opening hours are on our website.



Looking ahead

The Carmelite Library faces the future with a well-focused and coherent collection policy in areas of perennial significance which are also of great current interest in the Australian community. They are not covered in such depth elsewhere in the country. The Carmelitana collection is the most comprehensive in the region and among the few such collections in the world; in the area of spirituality and mysticism we have a regionally significant collection, perhaps the best in the Southern Hemisphere; and we have the largest Australian holding in Mariology, including all the scholarly periodicals.

We are convinced that the Library offers a significant doorway into the religious and spiritual quest which has been at the heart of human culture, and the immense learning that it produced across the centuries.

The Carmelites want to continue to build on what they have begun, and to carry into the future a resource which has already been 140 years in the making. We are committed to making this treasure house of the “wisdom of the elders” better known in Melbourne and beyond, and more accessible to interested users, whether to the scholar with a major research project or to the reader in search of spiritual enrichment. We want to continue its development according to a vision of excellence.

However, the Library requires financial security if it is to realise its potential as a educational, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual resource for the Australian community. We hope you will share our enthusiasm for this project.

For further information please contact the Director of the Library:

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