

**History of the O'Meara Mathematics Library, University of Notre Dame**

Karen Lanser, Parker Ladwig

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## A Brief History of the O'Meara Mathematics Library

Arithmetic and elementary college mathematics were part of the original curriculum written by Rev. Edward Sorin in 1842. The College of Science was founded in 1865. The first Science Hall was built on campus in 1884, when Rev. John A. Zahm moved the College of Science from two buildings that had been attached to the old church to what is currently LaFortune Student Center. It included a separate Science Library. In 1937 Prof. Karl Menger, a noted mathematician, started a graduate program in mathematics with a focus on research and publishing. In 1952 Nieuwland Science Hall was opened and it housed a Chemistry/Physics and Mathematics Library. In 1962 the Mathematics/Computer Science Library was established in what is now the Information Technologies Building, and it was renamed the Mathematics Library in 1979. The Library moved to its present location, 001 Hayes-Healy Center in 2001. Fr. Hesburgh officiated at the dedication of the Mathematics Library on September 5, 2002.

October 8, 2008, the Library was rededicated and named for Prof. O. Timothy O'Meara. Prof. O'Meara is a noted Mathematician, who has been on the faculty of the Mathematics Department since 1962, and twice served as its chairman. In 1976 he was named to the Kenna Endowed Chair in Mathematics. He is noted for serving as the first lay Provost of the University, 1978-1996. He is now an emeritus faculty member, but still very active and interested in the library

The O'Meara Library is a research library and most of the collection is directed toward faculty and graduate students. In addition to mathematicians, the library also has patrons from Engineering, Physics, Life Sciences, Business and Philosophy. Many of the undergraduates in the honors programs use the materials, and the undergraduates in general love to study at the Library.

The O'Meara Library has two unique collections, the Marston Morse collection and the Rare Book Collection. Morse (1892-1977) was one of

the world's leading theoretical mathematicians. He taught at Harvard, Cornell, Brown and the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, where he was a colleague of Einstein. He was also a "statesman of science" and along with Fr. Hesburgh represented the Vatican at the Atoms for Peace conference at the UN in 1952. He received over 20 honorary degrees from all over the world. He became close friends with Fr. Hesburgh and his widow donated Prof. Morse's working collection to Notre Dame in 1978. She has added more books to the collection the past few years. These are valuable additions to the collection since many of them are notes from lectures given by famous mathematicians and are not readily available elsewhere. Also many of the books are signed by the authors, most of whom are famous, and those are in the Morse Rare Collection. There is a bronze plaque of the bookplate located on the door of the study room named for Prof. Morse, and there is a display highlighting important aspects of his life in the room.

The other special collection is the Medium Rare collection. Mathematicians use historical literature and one of the faculty was doing research in Hesburgh Library and noticed a lot of older, valuable books in the general collection. He requested that they be housed in the Mathematics Library to better preserve them. Several Mathematics professors went through the collection at Hesburgh Library and identified items to transfer to the Mathematics Library. These books do not fit the criteria for the Rare Book Room at Hesburgh Library, but they are valuable enough that the Mathematics faculty did not want them in the general collection. They are in the far corner of the library, the Rare Book Alcove.

We hope you enjoy your visit to the O'Meara Mathematics Library