James Howarth and Sophie Quantrell have recently joined the St Edmund Hall team as Librarian and Assistant Librarian respectively. In this interview, we find out more about them and their hopes for the Teddy Hall Library.

Tell us a bit about yourselves.

Sophie Quantrell: I’m from Liverpool but I grew up in the South, in Swindon. I studied Theology at Nottingham and was a secondary school teacher before I started as a librarian. After that, I worked at the Theology Library in Oxford and then at the Bodleian. I do a fair amount of rock climbing and running, and I love reading, which is a bit of a stereotypical thing for a librarian? sci-fi and fantasy mainly.

James Howarth: I was the Assistant Librarian at Balliol until May, which was lovely. I really like working in college libraries because each one is a tiny microcosm of a University library, and they’ve got fantastic historic collections, which is fun. Before that, I worked for a think tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, where I managed their website and social media as well as working in their library, and before that, I worked at Lambeth Palace Library. Books were really the only option: I have an English degree from Oxford, a Medieval Studies MA from York and a Library MA from UCL? many varied and rather useless qualifications. I’m from Coventry originally and live in Warwick now, where I commute in from every day? which isn’t as bad as it sounds!
How have you found Teddy Hall so far?

SQ: It's really friendly and has a really nice atmosphere. People are always up for a conversation, students included.

JH: Definitely? the people are very welcoming and it's a beautiful college. It's nice to be in a compact yet busy community.

What are the best and worst aspects of the job so far?

The interior of St Edmund Hall's college library, which is housed in a converted Norman church

SQ: The best thing has been working in the building itself, because it's such a pretty building and there are lots of nooks and crannies all over the place. But then, that probably counts as the worst thing as well, especially when you've got to lug the Earth Sciences books or Law journals up the tower!

JH: The best thing for me is the collections in the Old Library, which are brilliant? they're sadly going away for a while for renovation works, so I've been trying to see as much of those as possible before they go on their?holiday?. The worst thing is that I have to walk twice as far from the train station to Teddy Hall as I did for Balliol.

What is the most important thing for people who use the Library to know?

SQ: That we're here to help! If they've got any questions, we're not waiting to shout at them?we want them to come and ask us things, not least because it makes our job more interesting as well.

JH: Exactly. Everyone at the Hall should think of it as their own personal library. People are always welcome to get in touch?not just students, but Old Members or anyone who has questions about the collection. We had some visitors who came in to look at the stained glass because their great-relative, in the nineteenth century, had repaired the fifteenth-century windows. Everyone should always feel like they can come and ask us questions or ask us to get books, even if that means going out to Blackwell's immediately?which, incidentally, is my favourite thing to do.

To find out more about the library, including a virtual tour.click here.2