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Our Lady of the Marian Library: A Mystery

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Our Lady of the Marian Library: A Mystery

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By Melanie Fields

Puzzling upon first glance, the painting “Our Lady of the Marian Library” can seem like a mystery to those unfamiliar with the history of this special institution at the University of Dayton. The image shows the Virgin Mary with her hands outstretched over Albert Emanuel Hall, the iconic columned building that sits at the forefront of the UD campus. However, anyone who has visited the Marian Library in the past several decades knows it actually resides on the seventh floor of Roesch Library.

So, what’s the deal?

Celebrating its 80th anniversary this year, the Marian Library has a long history of shifting spaces. Founded in 1943, it began with the donation of a single book placed in a small alcove in St. Mary’s Hall. Later, the library moved to a larger room and then to its own wing in

Albert Emanuel Hall. It remained there for over a quarter of a century before moving to the top floor of Roesch Library in 1971. Nevertheless, there are still a few telltale signs of the Marian Library's 25 year presence in Albert Emanuel Hall.

More clues and connections

When Sister Rosalia Saletel, C.S.A., painted "Our Lady of the Marian Library" in 1950, the composition didn't need any context. One archival photograph below clearly shows the painting hanging on the walls of Albert Emanuel Hall — the very building it depicts. But less than a decade later, more space was needed. A campaign led by the Society of Mary in 1959 secured enough donations to fund the construction of a new tri-level wing in the building to allow for even more storage for the Marian Library's growing collections.

Interestingly, "Our Lady of the Marian Library" does not just appear in painting form. She was also sculpted into the very facade of Albert Emanuel Hall during the 1960s by well-known Dayton artist Robert Koepnick. The relief was commissioned by Mr. and Mrs. Aloysius A. Roesch, the parents of Father Raymond Roesch, S.M., UD's president from 1959 to 1979. Depicted in the posture commonly known as "Seat of Wisdom," she still sits above the side entrance to the building, bearing quiet witness to the ever-changing history of UD.

'De Maria numquam satis'

Even after all of the modifications to Albert Emanuel Hall during the 1960s, the Marian Library moved to Roesch Library just a few years later. As one of the largest centers for scholarship on the Virgin Mary in the world, its collections and spaces continually expand. Fifty years after its move to the seventh floor of Roesch Library, the Marian Library acquired additional space on Roesch Library's third floor for its extensive archival and rare book collections and in Fitz Hall for art and artifacts.

As testament to the Marian Library's inevitable growth, the painting of "Our Lady of the Marian Library" is now on view to all visitors who venture up to the seventh floor. The Latin phrase depicted in the open book at the bottom of the composition — *De Maria numquam satis* — was a favorite expression of Father William Joseph Chaminade, a co-founder of the Marianists. These words form the fitting motto of the Marian Library: "There is never enough about Mary."

— *Melanie Fields is a library specialist in the Marian Library.*



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“Our Lady of the Marian Library” hangs in Albert Emanuel Hall, ca. 1950. Photograph from the Marian Library archival collection.