

WORDS OF LIFE



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*of*  
LIFE

*Celebrating Fifty Years of the Hesburgh Library's  
Message, Mural, and Meaning*

*By* BILL SCHMITT

*Foreword by Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C.*

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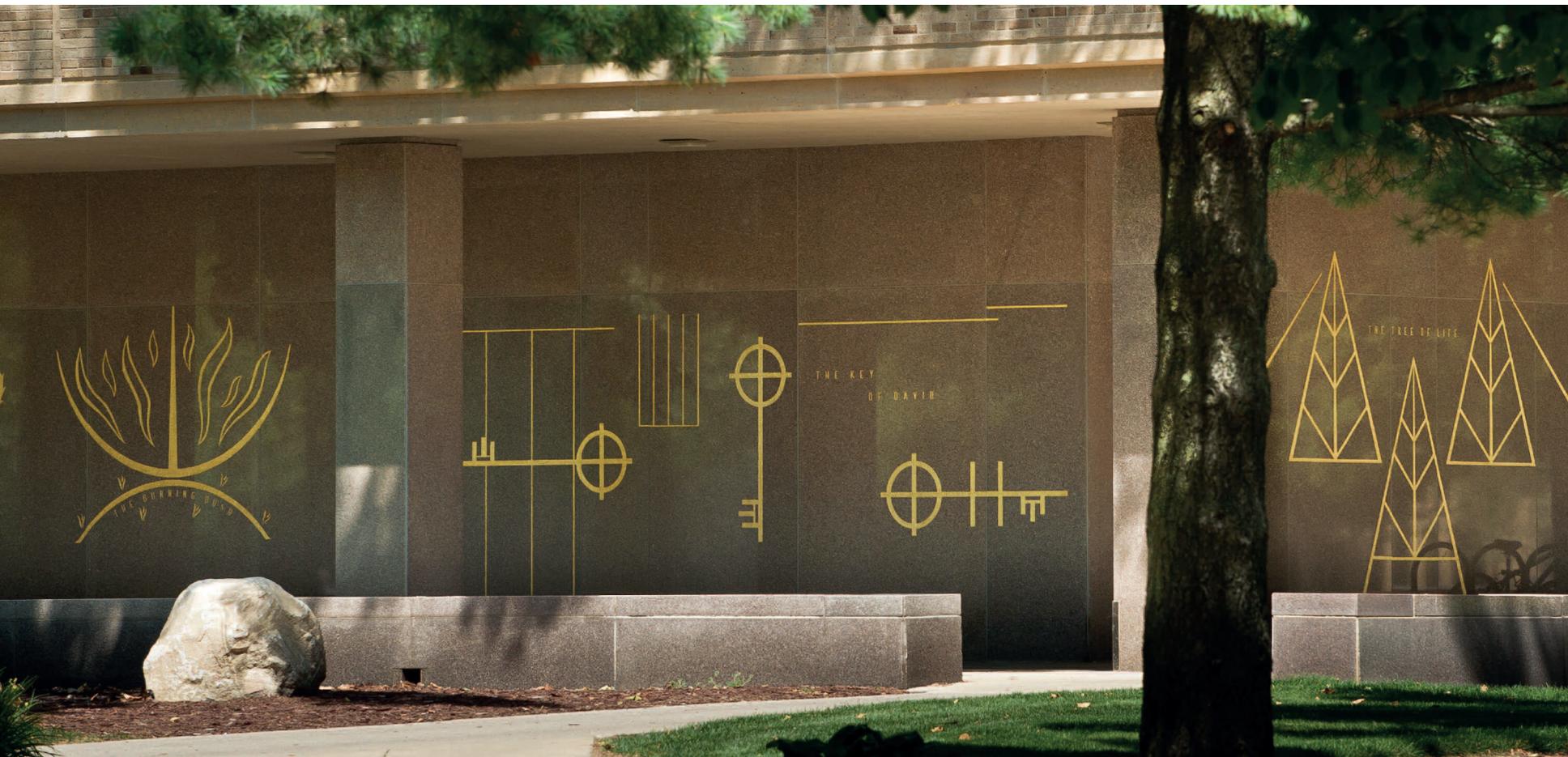
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# Foreword

By their very nature, libraries deal with legacies. And, by their nature, legacies deal with the past and the future. I am grateful that the building we called the Memorial Library in 1963 has reached an important milestone—a fiftieth anniversary—in its mission to help build a better future. And I am glad that this book celebrating the anniversary keeps an eye on tomorrow’s information world while also highlighting many wonderful memories that are evoked by the Library and insights from the past that are treasured within its high, strong walls.

Parts of this book evoked happy memories for me, but I choose not to think in terms of any personal legacies or private nostalgia. The love I feel for this Library is an ongoing, present-day love, rich enough to keep me coming back to my office here seven days a week—for as long as the Lord allows me to do so. It is a love of the relationships I am blessed to begin, maintain, and deepen here, and it is a love of the pursuit of information I am blessed to continue here, as students read the news to me and remarkable people from on and off campus visit me to share their thoughts and their prayers. They are interested in lessons I have learned from my experiences in many roles, certainly as president of Our Lady’s University, and as a priest—my most cherished role.

The lessons I hope will be drawn from the story of this Library and from my role in its fifty-years-and-counting lifespan are a mixture of past, present, and future. I wanted in 1963, and still desire today, for the Memorial Library literally to stand for the future of Notre Dame as a place of unmatched intellectual achievement, free inquiry, and providential contributions to mankind. But I wanted, and still desire, that this be in the context of a distinctive pursuit of truth

that is recognized in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart and in Our Lady atop the Golden Dome. The muralist Millard Sheets captured this pursuit in the Library's *Word of Life* mural, too, showing that the pursuit is a legacy passed along since the dawn of human history, a legacy that has generated countless treasures of wisdom, many of which are preserved and accessible here.

For me and for many in the Notre Dame family, the pursuit of wisdom points to Christ the Teacher, pictured in the mural. But it also begins anew every day with Christ as both Alpha and Omega (as symbolized in a gold etching outside the Library), and with the Holy Spirit, who leads our procession into the future if we are receptive, in all our diversity and incompleteness, to be formed and informed. Let the Library be a place on this campus where that hunger for truth will keep getting stronger, supporting freedom and justice around the world, inspiring excellence, and prodding us to bigger dreams. Let this story of the Library encourage us to celebrate our Notre Dame goal, a legacy that really does bring life, sweetness, and hope.

*Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C.*





# *Acknowledgments*

The prospect of doing library research often conjures up images of knowledgeable, helpful individuals who will be happy to share information with you, if you'll only ask. In the course of my particular library research—collecting information for this book about the Hesburgh Library—such images proved to be a providential reality. I asked a lot of questions and made many requests for assistance, and these became opportunities to encounter all sorts of remarkable people with kind hearts and great insights.

My gratitude goes out to all those whom I interviewed, all who aided my search for facts, all who helped me check and improve my work, and all who supported me in varied ways during this journey as author. I was privileged to meet many new friends, to deepen many existing friendships, and to draw still closer to the Notre Dame family through their memories and aspirations. Every insight I gained into this great university's past, present, and future made me better, I hope, at my work as one of the communications staff members telling the stories of this place to the world. My endeavors for this book reaffirmed how the Holy Spirit is at work here, making and enriching connections among people, places, symbols, events, traditions—anything offered up for the greater good.

The first of my particular thank-you notes goes to a Stradivarius among instruments of the Holy Spirit, the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., Notre Dame's president emeritus. Throughout the process of my research and writing, Father Ted (as I refer to him in this book) made himself available for interviews and discussions, but even more meaningful has been receiving his blessing, joining him in prayer in his private chapel, and enjoying the hospitality of his

office suite on the Library's thirteenth floor. That hospitality, graciously extended and amplified by his assistant, Melanie Chapleau, allowed me to glimpse the way in which Father Ted himself feels at home in the Library—and wants everyone else to feel that way, too.

Numerous people with offices in the Library generously offered me their time and knowledge so I could better describe the place they understand in depth. My thanks go out to all of them, including Diane Parr Walker, the Edward H. Arnold University Librarian, who set the tone of support that greeted me all around the building. Art librarian Marsha Stevenson, along with her coauthors in the excellent Hesburgh Libraries' history *What Is Written Remains*, set a high standard of research for which I am indebted; I appreciated her review of my draft text.

I am grateful to two people with library ties who were crucial in launching this project with me aboard. Professor Susan C. Ohmer, who holds the William Carey and Helen Kuhn Carey Chair in Modern Communication and serves the University as Digital Media Program Manager, believed in me based on my earlier work for the Library and for the University of Notre Dame Press. Katharina Blackstead, who retired in 2012 as advancement officer for the Hesburgh Libraries after nearly forty years on the library faculty, has been a particularly valued friend, supporter, and editor. It was my pleasure to work under her supervision on the *Access* newsletter that covered people and trends of the libraries. The attentiveness to detail that made her an ideal leader for that newsletter and the attentiveness to people that energized her relationships with benefactors combined to make her an invaluable source of guidance and encouragement for me.

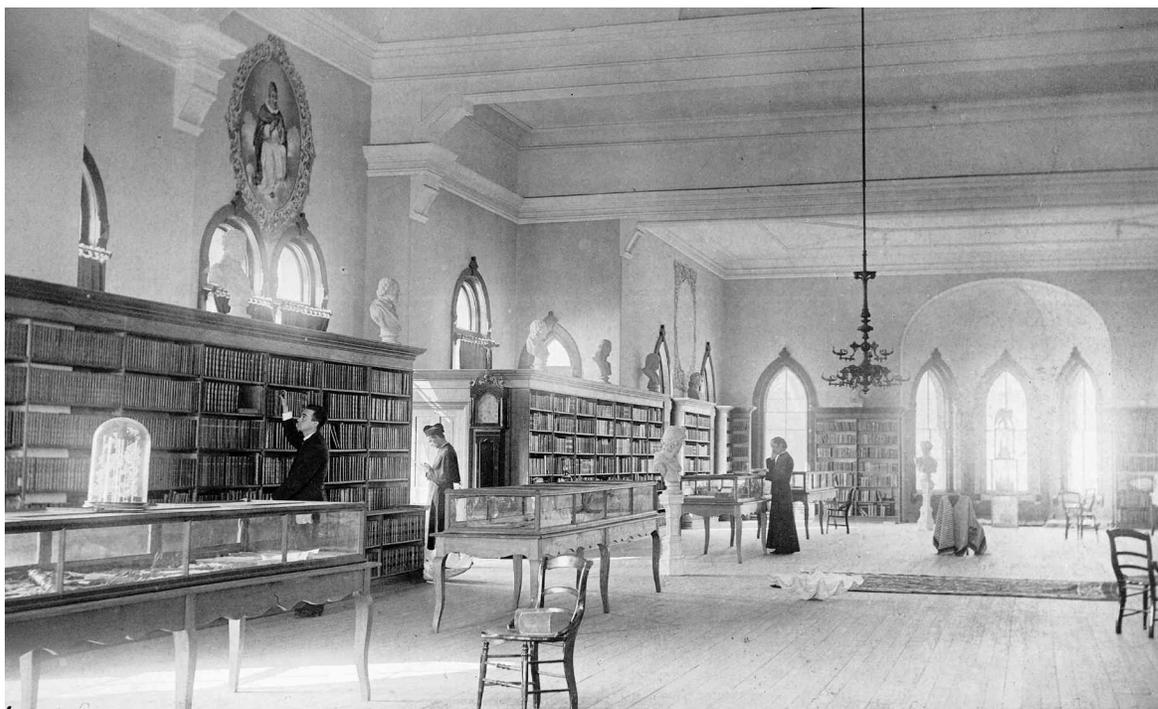
Knowing the importance of so many Library officials (including former directors and university librarians) who laid the groundwork for the stories I'm telling here, and knowing the importance of countless benefactors who were vital to the birth and life of the Library, I apologize to all those leaders and supporters who do not receive credit by name in this book. Please know that I take their roles to heart and hope that readers of this book will go beyond these pages (to resources like *What Is Written Remains*) to learn more about the people of the Hesburgh Libraries.

As I go beyond the Library walls in these acknowledgments, I turn with particular gratitude to Mary C. Young, who made valuable contributions as a research assistant. Mary was a Notre Dame graduate student who received her master's degree in early Christian studies in 2012. She found enough spare time away from her curricular activities—many of them firmly grounded in the Hesburgh Library—to generate rich discoveries and enlightening ideas for this book. At the time of this writing, she was working in New York as a researcher and preparing to apply for doctoral studies; any school would be blessed to add her research talents and intellectual enthusiasm to its community.

The university at large served up amazing resources for my work, as usual. I'm primarily speaking of administrators, faculty, and staff of today and yesterday who gave interviews, offered guidance, and provided materials for the book. I thank them for their time and engagement with

the process. Chief among these sources of wisdom was senior archivist Peter Lysy. This book gained much from his readiness to be a sherpa amid the verbal content of the University Archives, along with the help of Charles Lamb, assistant director of the Archives, in navigating through the archived images.

Through the archives and other channels, I benefited greatly from the publications and records generated by writers, photographers, and others in the university's offices of development and communications. Reportage by students, too, in university publications such as the *Scholastic* magazine, provided eyewitness accounts from the past. In a number of cases where only periodical titles or press releases or websites are cited, some highly skilled scribes may go unnamed. All these individuals should know my gratitude for their service as communicators on behalf of Notre Dame, a service in which I am privileged to share. Please forgive any instances where appropriate attributions were accidentally excluded or misstated as I attempted to combine an array of sources, from the university and beyond, into a conversational narrative. I have attempted to give proper credit to those who provided nuggets and comprehensive treatments alike. In the latter category, I think particularly of architectural historian Margaret Grubiak's 2010 scholarly article, "Visualizing



the Modern Catholic University: The Original Intention of ‘Touchdown Jesus’ at the University of Notre Dame,” in the journal *Material Religion*—an abundance of insights that deserve to be savored by those who enjoy this book. Among other off-campus sources providing facts or showing support pertinent to this story, I’m thankful to individuals at the *South Bend Tribune*; they led me to an enjoyable conversation with their sports editor emeritus, Joe Doyle of the class of 1949. Also, it was a delight to enjoy the insights and support of Rev. Carolyn Sheets Owen-Towle, the daughter of muralist Millard Sheets; her perspectives on her father’s amazing work were unique and uplifting.

One other essential resource within the Notre Dame family is the community of priests in the Congregation of Holy Cross. Members of that community have contributed knowledge and wisdom to projects during all ten years of my work as a university communicator. For this book, besides the most crucial input from Father Ted, I want to thank Rev. Thomas Blantz, C.S.C.; Rev. Paul Doyle, C.S.C.; Rev. Bill Miscamble, C.S.C.; and Rev. Bob Pelton, C.S.C.



I am thankful to the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) and the Institute for Educational Initiatives (IEI), the organizations I serve every day as a Notre Dame communicator. Director Rev. Timothy Scully, C.S.C., and associate director Packy Lyden of the IEI have shown special support for my desire to portray the education of both minds and hearts at the University of Notre Dame. Thanks also to esteemed campus friends including Prof. Kevin Christiano, Matt Cashore, Harv Humphrey, and John Nagy.

My wife, Eileen, deserves endless thanks for the support she has shown me throughout this whole journey, which has occupied time during weekends and vacation days. I send my gratitude and love to her and to my daughter, Mary. They represent in my life the ever-present gift for which I reserve the highest thanks and praise. Here I'm thinking of the gift of God's love and the instruction of Christ the Teacher through good times and bad. It has been a privilege to learn about the Hesburgh Library as a place where the Word of Life—and words of life I've shared with people like those cited above—can be celebrated in countless connections. May this book, in some small way, enrich that celebration and expand those connections.

