Saint John’s First “Bible Project”
(With a little background, first, from *The Record, ca. 1940*)

With background from The Record, 1940
The Record commemorates the 500th anniversary of printing
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?/CSBArchNews,29060 – 500 year celebration. Gutenberg
was the first European to use movable type printing, in around 1439, and the global
inventor of the printing press.
Benedictines the first custodians of learning
The Record, May 16, 1940, p. 2 http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?/CSBArchNews,29061
An old proverb, much cherished in the Benedictine order, reads: *Monasterium sine armario quasi castrum sine armamentario.*

The proverb says that a monastery without a library is like a camp without an arsenal.

The monks’ love for books and zeal for collecting books antedates the establishment of the Benedictines in the sixth century; it dates back to the very first cenobite.
"A new type of work was found for monks"
A familiar bit of human history, but with perhaps a slightly different slant??
(Cause/effect question?)
Illustration: http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u?/ArcaArt,7649
This work soon became one of their principal occupations. Every Benedictine monastery had its *Scriptorium*, the place where the work of copying manuscripts was carried on.

It was not a boring task as some might suppose, but it was a labor of love for the monks, who also made a work of art out of the task.

Illustration: [http://cdm.csbsju.edu/a7/HMMLClm7031](http://cdm.csbsju.edu/a7/HMMLClm7031)

Labor of love = works of art
For a Benedictine monk the library can never be too rich. Other material conveniences can easily become superfluous to his needs, perhaps even a hindrance to his work, but not the library. Though the library is a material collection of books, the monk looks at the library from a spiritual angle. He makes use of books as a potent means of advancement to perfection, for which purpose he came to the monastery. Next to prayer, books are the most convenient tool which the Benedictine seizes to help him attain his immortal destiny.
The very familiarity of the monks with books delayed the organization of a formal monastic library at St. John's for many years. Instead of a central library cared for by a librarian, the early monastery was characterized by a great many small collections. These were of two kinds: the personal collections of the individual monks, and the communal collection of the professors in the school. Our knowledge of both is sketchy.
We have reliable evidence of the existence of private collections from the fact that individual monks often contributed books to the Abbey Library; and we find that upon the death of a priest of the monastery the library usually received the collection of books he had possessed. Apart from this we know little.


Private collections added to the Abbey Library
1878-79 Catalogue mentions “a valuable library”
In 1875 or ‘76, Father Bernard Locnickar, O.S.B., began a handwritten record of the books in the Abbey Library at Saint John’s.

Early Abbey Library ledger catalog

! This handwritten accession ledger was begun ABOUT THE SAME TIME that “Charles Cutter made the first explicit statement regarding the objectives of a bibliographic system in his Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalog in 1876.” [Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_card_catalog]

Hoffmann’s book on the first 50 years has the Cutter number “.H64” for “Hoffmann”: LD 4811.S8582 H64
The list as given is primarily an accession record, convertible, by applying an ingenious shorthand system (key on first page), into a system for locating the books in the sections where they are shelved. The accession record thus became also a kind of catalog.

There are 8175 volumes recorded, of which nos. 1-3799 were entered by Bernard Loonkar, O.S.B., nos. 3800-5555 by Urban Fischer, O.S.B. (his entries are characterized by beautiful penmanship), nos. 5556-8175 by Francis Mershmann, O.S.B., and Norber Hofbauer, O.S.B.

The first 75 entries are either Bibles, parts of the Bible, or Biblical literature.
Most books entered in catalog were bibles
Image also appears on Matt’s blog, http://www.booksfromthehmmlbasement.blogspot.com/2012_01_08_archive.html, but I took this photo.
First book listed was a 1572 Bible in German
From Matt’s blog - http://www.hmml.org/news10/MH.htm
Abbey and student library locations in the early years: Roloff diagram
Abbey and student library locations in the early years: photos
Cropped from Aschemann collection photos, LP066 (1883) and LP012 (ca. 1884, according to *A Visual History of Saint Benedict's and Saint John's*)
Abbey and student library locations in the early years: photo of Wimmer Hall exterior
Wimmer Hall - Library ca. 1910s-1920s?
Abbey and student library locations in the early years: photo of Wimmer Hall interior O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Images\Ascheman Coll.- historical photos – LP054 Wimmer Hall Library ca. 1917