

Drawing the lines on the map: Types of theological libraries in Australia and New Zealand

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Preface

In recent years there has been a steady growth in the number and diversity of theological libraries existing in Australia and New Zealand. The use of the term 'theological library' without indicating the type of library has given rise to problems for those people who wish to define, describe or compare theological libraries. In this article I have created three major categories of theological libraries, and also discussed theological collections in other libraries. The article is taken from the second chapter of my doctoral thesis, and I am grateful to Monash University for providing funds through the Publications Award to write up my thesis for publication.

A theological library can be defined as one which principally collects works of theology; the three major categories of theological library in Australia are academic (the libraries of theological colleges), monastic (those which serve religious communities), and resource centres (for lay people). Some libraries fall into more than one of these categories - for example, a monastic library which is housed in a institution where theology is taught. These categories define libraries by types of users, not by materials held - there is some relationship between user and collection, but this relationship is sometimes blurred, especially in the case of the second category, monastic libraries.

Academic theological libraries provide materials for students, most of whom are undergraduates. These libraries usually also provide materials for the college's academic staff and for ministers from the sponsoring church/churches, as well as for post-graduate students, researchers, and in some cases, members of the public. Most of these colleges are denominationally based, but some, such as Bible colleges, are non-denominational. The collections in academic theological libraries consist mainly of materials for college programs, including reference works and some non-book materials, as well as research-level materials in selected areas. The size of these libraries varies considerably, ranging from Moore College (Newtown, NSW) with 115,000 volumes⁶, and the Joint Theological Library (Parkville Vic), with 112,000 volumes, the two largest collections of theology in Australia, to the Norman Dunning Library of the Pacific College for Evangelism (Nth Parramatta NSW) which holds only 200 volumes. Although libraries in this category have been established to serve one type of user they may be extensively used by other groups. For example the Lohé Memorial Library, Luther Seminary has more members of the public than theological students on its register of borrowers. This situation is partly explained by its collections of materials for ministers and teachers which are made available to the public.

The second category is monastic libraries - the libraries of monastic communities - most of which belong to the Roman Catholic Church, although the term 'monastic' is not meant to imply that the library is located in a monastery. These libraries are usually small, holding collections which specialise in doctrinal, devotional and popular works of theology and the history of the supporting body. Many monastic libraries are not open to the public, although members of the public may be permitted to use the collection by arrangement. Examples of libraries in this category are the libraries of Assumption Seminary, Plumpton, NSW, which holds 10,000 volumes and the Augustinian Pre-Novitiate House in Brookvale, NSW which holds 200 volumes. Both of these libraries belong to the Roman Catholic communities and may be used by members of the public only by arrangement with the librarian. Monastic libraries which hold notable collections of theological materials include St Dominic's Studium Library, St Dominic's Priory (Camberwell, Vic), which holds 40,000 volumes and the Holy Trinity Abbey Library, Benedictine Community (New Norcia, WA), which holds 25,000 volumes. Because they are held within a community - resembling personal rather than public collections - and their owners do not want the library's existence publicised, many monastic libraries are not listed in *Collections of religion and theology in Australia and New Zealand (CORT)* or other library directories.

The boundaries of these categories become blurred when monastic libraries also serve as academic theological libraries or resource centres. Monastic libraries which are also academic theological libraries are those which are used by students who are community members. These libraries are likely to have collections which have more in common with academic theological libraries than other monastic libraries. An example is the Veech Library, Catholic Institute of Sydney, which in earlier times was used only by students and staff of St Patrick's College. When the college was opened to people outside the community, the Veech library was opened to non-resident students, but it still serves St Patrick's College residents at the Catholic Institute of Sydney.⁷

⁶ All statistics in this article are taken from Jenkin, Coralie E.J. *Collections of religion and theology in Australia and New Zealand*. Adelaide Auslib Press, 1992.

⁷ This example was given when the Catholic Institute of Sydney was at Manly.

The second area in which the categories are blurred is that of monastic libraries which are also resource centres: those libraries which hold collections of theology, are located in a community, and provide a resource for people outside the community. An example is the Shalom Library at the Centre for Christian-Jewish Relations (Kew, Vic), which has a collection of 2,000 volumes. The Centre supported by the Roman Catholic Church, aims to foster relationships between Christians and Jews by providing materials to members of the public in the field of Judaica and Christian/Jewish relations.

Libraries in the third category, resource centres, collect materials principally for lay members of the sponsoring church or for a particular interest group. These libraries usually concentrate on collecting materials with a practical rather than an academic focus. Examples include the Catholic Education Offices (Adelaide, Townsville, Cairns, Leichhardt, Canberra and Melbourne), which collect materials for religious education teachers. Resource centres range in size from the Central Catholic Library (Melbourne), which holds 55,000 volumes, to the smallest theological libraries, such as the Australian Student Christian Movement Library at the University of Melbourne, which holds only 200 volumes. Resource centres are usually smaller than libraries in the other two categories, holding, on average, about 750 volumes, although it is very likely that if all monastic libraries were to be included in a count, their average size would be smaller. Some resource centres listed in *CORT* are so small that it is likely that they have additional collections of non-theological materials. Many of the resource centres have been created relatively recently, and they have yet to build up their collections.

These are the major types of theological libraries, but at least a few theological works can usually be found in all libraries in Australia, ranging from a large collection in an academic library to perhaps just a Bible to be used for legal purposes or books of theological reflections in a library with a main subject emphasis elsewhere. This universality can be attributed to Australia's religious heritage, to the use of scripture for legal and reference purposes, and to the scope of theological subject matter:

Religion appears to pervade all aspects of individual experience and ways of knowing, and impinge, in some measure or other, on all areas of human endeavour and achievement (Osborne, 1978,7)

Academic libraries in Australia hold varying amounts of theology, depending on such factors as courses which are being, or have been taught, separate collections, donations and archival holdings and on whether the university is associated with a religious body. These holdings are increasing following the recent establishment of church-supported universities, affiliation agreements with theological colleges, and an increase in the number of subjects in theology being offered by secular universities - movements which have taken place mainly since the beginning of the 1980s. The older universities and those more recent ones which teach theology have larger collections - the largest collection of theology in a university library in Australia is held at Fisher Library in the University of Sydney, which in a collection of 4.2 million items has 46,000 items in theology, including the archive of Australian Judaica. This figure ranks the University eleventh in size of theological collections in Australia, the largest collection held by a secular body and a collection larger than the collections of many theological libraries. None of the 'universities of technology' - developed in Australia since the 1980s - completed the *CORT* questionnaire; those which were contacted by telephone did not want to be included in the survey because their libraries held so little theology.

There are some collections of theology held in university college libraries sponsored by churches. An example is the Jeremiah Murphy Library, Newman College, University of Melbourne (Parkville, Vic), which holds 2,260 volumes of theology in its collection. Some libraries located in university colleges are also the libraries for theological colleges, which means that they have collections both for theological students and for university students. An example is the Leon Morris Library of Ridley College (Parkville, Vic), which has a collection of 36,000 volumes.

There are a few special libraries not supported by a religious body which hold collections of theological materials. These are libraries which specialize in subjects to which theology makes a contribution. Examples include the libraries of Action for World Development (Surry Hills, NSW) and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Berrimah, NT). Many other special libraries hold theological materials peripheral to their subject - for example libraries in the fields of history, language studies, sociology and psychology, while the contents of archives often reflect the large volume of theology generated in the past.

The state libraries all hold collections of theology - for example the State Library of Queensland has a collection of 17,000 volumes, including collections of hymnology, folk hymns and music. Many of the works in the state library collections date from the 19th century, reflecting the emphasis on religion at that time, the output of theological publishing, and the role of ministers in the governing bodies of the state libraries. The National

Library of Australia holds a collection of approximately 20,000 volumes of theology. The library contains 'extensive collections of missionary records in microform ... a high collection level in the following subjects: religion, religions, theology, social and ecclesiastical theology, church history, sects, comparative religion, Indian religions, Judaism, Islam'. Approximately 3,000 volumes donated to the National Library from the Australian Buddhist Library, which, with the National Library's other holdings of Buddhist literature (Gosling, 1995), forms the largest collection of Buddhist works in Australia.

Although public libraries hold a few volumes of theology - usually popular, donated and reference works - a small number hold genuine collections of theology. Other libraries which may hold collections of theology include school libraries: those which do not have a religious affiliation usually hold copies of the scriptures and theological reference works, while those with religious affiliation can be expected to hold materials about their own church as well as resources for religious education and devotional reading. Many churches own small libraries for their members or for children in their Sunday Schools.

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Managing a One-person Library Toni Silson, Lady Davidson Hospital

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The most important point to remember in managing a one-person library is that you, as the librarian, are really managing yourself. The aspects of management that you need to be aware of, therefore, are the importance of time management and setting priorities, planning the service ethic, and networking.

Time management

Because of the limitations inherent in managing a one-person library, being able to manage your time effectively is of primary importance. It is necessary to be realistic in your appraisal of the amount of time taken to do specific tasks, and of the importance of each task to the overall objectives of the library. You will therefore have a clearer idea of which services are necessary, and which are just 'nice', and allocate your time accordingly.

The limitations of a small library are not necessarily a cause for apology. It is possible to do a particular job better than larger libraries, whose resources and services are less focused. The staff and management of the organisation which the library serves should also be aware of the limitations inherent in a small but specialised service. There should be no feeling of disappointment, either in them or the librarian, if it becomes necessary to refer them on to another type of library or service. Many one-person libraries are also staffed by part-time librarians. This makes time management and prioritisation even more difficult. There is often a feeling of guilt on the part of the librarian that s/he is not able to provide all the services that s/he (or the users) would like. Although this feeling is natural, it is not necessary, as these limitations are imposed by the organisation, not the librarian.

Planning

Time put into planning and setting objectives is not wasted time, as without objectives, it is not possible to adequately prioritise work. Many one-person librarians complain about the lack of time to do everything that needs to be done. This is often true, but it is also true that time will be found when the work is considered necessary to the good management of the library; and planning is as necessary as shelving books.