Australian and New Zealand theological libraries and librarianship today: the impact of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association in its first decade

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It is exactly ten years since I first attended a conference of the American Theological Library Association and presented a paper on the topic of Australian and New Zealand theological libraries and librarianship. The intervening decade has seen unprecedented activity among theological libraries and librarians in our two countries. My purpose, on this occasion, is to give an account of this activity and to provide a sober assessment of its achievements and its failures.

1. Developments affecting theological libraries

Theological libraries, inevitably, are affected by the environment in which they operate and there are several particular developments which are having and will have considerable impact on theological libraries. One such development is occurring in the area of theological education; others, within the wider context of librarianship in Australia and New Zealand.

Postgraduate courses

The past decade has seen a spectacular increase in the number of students enrolling in theological courses in Australia and New Zealand and a consequent growth in demand for postgraduate courses; so much so, that virtually all schools offering undergraduate degrees (typically a Bachelor of Theology, Bachelor of Arts (Theology) or Bachelor of Divinity) have felt compelled to offer postgraduate courses (typically a Master of Theology) as well. The demand for such courses is coming, not so much from candidates for ordination (where some, though not all, churches are having difficulty recruiting sufficient numbers), but from a wide variety of people who wish to pursue theology as an academic exercise, as a matter of interest, or to equip themselves better for some area of lay service in the church.

The effect of this growth in student numbers has been to place great pressure on the parlous resources of over-taxed theological libraries and to force librarians to look at ways of working together to maximise the use of scarce resources. There has been, for example, considerable emphasis on the rationalisation of serials subscriptions, with cancellations always being matched by new subscriptions to the burgeoning lists of new titles constantly appearing on the scene. There have also been some attempts at cooperation in the acquisition of monographs, with one particular project being worthy of special mention, because of its uniqueness in the Australasian scene. I refer to the Sydney College of Divinity Collection Evaluation Project.

While the oldest college of divinity (Melbourne) dates back as far as 1910 and the Australian College of Theology to an earlier date, (1891) similarly named consortia of theological schools have been established mainly during the 1980s in Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Auckland. In the case of Melbourne, there are actually several consortia within the consortium. Motivated somewhat by a desire to pool resources and somewhat by a spirit of ecumenical cooperation, these colleges of divinity/theology provide accreditation for degrees, either through an affiliation with a university (which

grants the degree) or through the relevant state board of higher education. Where there is university involvement, however, it is generally on terms which require the theological colleges and seminaries to provide most, if not all, of the teaching and assessment. as well as the resources - including, of course, the library resources. In Australia, the teaching of theology has been prohibited (by their charter) in most of the older universities, and has generally not been taken up (except through the colleges of divinity) by the newer ones. The effect of this absence of the teaching of theology from the universities is that the bulk of the burden of the provision of theological literature falls on the theological colleges and seminaries - not only to meet their own needs, but the wider needs of the nation as well. Thus, the need for cooperation in collection development by theological libraries can hardly be over-exaggerated. The collection evaluation project and resultant joint collection development policy of the nine libraries of the Sydney College of Divinity (SCD) was developed in response to the perceived need to rationalize resources and improve the overall coverage of materials to support the postgraduate programs which the SCD had already set in place (Smith and Goodall, 1993). The main method used was list-checking, supported by visual appraisal and faculty surveys. Considerable effort went into the production of lists for twenty-eight appropriate subdivisions of the traditional theological quadrivium and the checking of holdings of each library against these lists (Sydney College of Divinity. 1993, Assessment Report, p. 2-3). This was unquestionably the biggest collection development project ever undertaken in Australasia and, while it has come under some criticism for methodological weaknesses (Sydney College of Divinity. 1993, p. 317-331), it is serving its purpose of guiding the collection development priorities of the individual libraries. A more modest project, based on visual appraisal by faculty and library staff is currently under way also among the four libraries of the Auckland Consortium for Theological Education (Bright, 1996).

Distributed National Collection

A development within the wider Australian library community which has special relevance to theological libraries is that which is known as the 'Distributed National Collection' (DNC). While the terminology has come into local library parlance in recent years, the underlying concept is not at all new. Twenty years ago, George S. Bonn suggested: 'The library user's concern is the totality of available resources upon which he draws and not just one library's collection. It is the totality which should therefore be evaluated' (Bonn, 1974, p. 296; cf. p. 293). Motivated by the increasing inability of libraries, especially in Australia, to cope with the current explosion of information with ever-decreasing budgets, the DNC concept encourages all librarians to see the total resources of the nation as one collection, distributed across thousands of libraries. The implications for cooperative collection development and resource sharing underlying such a concept are bound to be far-reaching.

For theological libraries in Australia, the DNC concept would seem to be of critical importance. While John M. Gesell could say of theological libraries in North America that they '... will need to depend on larger university collections elsewhere ...', such a comment would be out of the question in the Australian context (Gesell, 1982, p. 45). Australia simply does not have the major research collections in academic libraries to back up the theological library collections. In view of the very smallness of most theological library collections, Margaret Henty, National Conspectus Officer, sees a vital need for theological libraries to identify strengths and weaknesses to facilitate national cooperation (Henty, 1992, p. 20), much as the North American Theological Inventory sought to do in North America; but, significantly, the DNC concept in Australia will include also such collections as do exist in academic and research libraries. The way in which libraries become involved is by carrying out a collection evaluation, describing it in Conspectus terms, and recording the results on a national database, hosted by the Australian Bibliographic Network. So far, only one theological library (St Mark's,

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Canberra) has taken up the challenge of contributing Conspectus data to the DNC Office (National Library of Australia. DNC Office, 1994, p. 9).

Networking

Networking on a national level is gradually becoming an important factor for such theological libraries as have managed to become involved in it. The 1994 statistics indicate that nine theological libraries are members of the Australian Bibliographic Network and one, of the New Zealand Bibliographic Network. These two national networks are currently undergoing a metamorphosis into a joint state-of-the-art network, which will be known in Australia as World 1. Supported by leading-edge technology, it will be a one-stop shop for the sharing and supply, on a world-wide basis, of bibliographic and documentary data, both textual and graphical. Through the Internet, cataloguers will have immediate access to major databases around the world, online authority files, and immediate downloading of data, while the document supply facility will permit the searching, identification, online ordering or instant transmission and payment for documents all in the one operation. The potential impact of such a facility on theological libraries staggers the imagination and it will be interesting to see how long it will take our libraries to come to terms with it..

2. Developments within Theological Librarianship

As has been indicated already, the past decade has also seen major developments within the field of theological librarianship, central to which has been the establishment of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association (ANZTLA).

Establishment of ANZTLA

ANZTLA was established in Adelaide, 27 August 1985, with a small executive, consisting of a President and a Secretary-Treasurer, both of whom would be elected by the annual meeting, together with one representative of the region in which the next conference was to be held. (Zweck, 1985). The association had been formed with the support and encouragement of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools (ANZATS) and it was always intended that the two associations would work closely together. Member schools of ANZATS would be charged a supplementary fee to their annual ANZATS membership fee to be members of the library association. However, differences of opinion soon arose regarding the precise nature of the connection between the two associations. Although the relationship has always been harmonious, with joint sessions being held at the 1988, 1991, and 1995 conferences, the differences of opinion which surfaced at the outset were to lead, within two years, to the organisational separation of the two associations. The idea of having the membership fees of ANZATS libraries collected from ANZATS schools together with their ANZATS membership fees and passed on in bulk to ANZTLA was intended to guarantee the involvement of the then 57 ANZATS libraries in the new association. This involvement would both provide stability for the new association and go a long way towards ensuring that the interests of ANZATS in the development of the libraries of its member schools would always be taken into consideration. The difficulty arose from the fact that ANZATS was not willing to support financially an association which included non-ANZATS members, while the librarians wanted to have an association which was open to all libraries and individuals involved in the study of theology and religion.

When the inaugural conference of ANZTLA was held at St Mark's Library, Canberra, ACT, 26-27 August 1986, with an attendance of 26 librarians, it approved a constitution which opened up membership in the association, not only to non-ANZATS Christian institutions (such as Bible colleges, church administrative libraries and para-church organizations), but also to non-Christian libraries (Arns, 1987). Although non-Christian

institutions and individuals are noticeably absent from ANZTLA (only one such library having joined to date), it was inevitable that ANZATS would not continue to provide financial support for the new association, which had departed so radically from the proposals of ANZATS and the organisational tie-up between the two associations was severed within two years. There was some concern on the part of ANZTLA as to whether ANZATS libraries would continue to remain within the ANZTLA organisation, but when ANZTLA was left to sell itself to the constituency in 1988, it was a great relief to the organisers to note that virtually all of the ANZATS libraries were happy to renew their membership. To this day, these libraries have remained the backbone of the association, and have also been the greatest beneficiaries of it.

The inaugural conference also decided to publish a regular bulletin which made its first appearance in 1987 and has been published three times a year ever since. Its self-effacing name, however, belies its real nature and significance in the literature of theological librarianship. The ANZTLA Newsletter has been a valuable source of professional education and enrichment, containing essays and articles of considerable substance (including conference papers), as well as a frontline information service on the activities of the association, its member libraries, and librarianship in general. It was also decided that the gathering of annual statistics should become a project of the association. An unauthorised beginning had been initiated by Trevor Zweck and Gary Gorman in 1984 (Zweck. 1985b). The work they had done would now become the basis of the continuing effort (ANZTLA, 1986).

Australasian Religion Index

The second annual conference, held at Ridley College, Melbourne, Victoria, with an enrolment of 44, formally ended the organisational link with the ANZATS; but it was significant for the inauguration of a project which would bring major benefits to ANZATS schools, as indeed to all researchers in religion and theology. The continued production of the *Australasian Religion Index* on a shoestring budget and with a team of thirty volunteer indexers from across the length and breadth of Australia and New Zealand has been one of the truly remarkable achievements of ANZTLA and a major contribution to the world of theological bibliography. The idea was the brain-child of Gary Gorman and John Mills, lecturers at what was to become the Charles Sturt University - Riverina, Wagga Wagga, NSW. Acting on their own initiative, they presented a carefully researched paper and specific proposals to the conference. They noted that there were more than 300 religious serials being published in Australia (apart from New Zealand), of which only nine were being indexed in Religion Index One. They noted also the significant absence of specifically Australian research tools in the fields of theology and religion. The need was an obvious one, and the conference adopted the proposals with some trepidation, but with considerable enthusiasm (Zweck, 1987). A pilot project, coordinated by Gorman, was set in motion and, on the basis of this trial venture, ANZTLA joined forces with the Centre for Library Studies (later to become the Centre for Information Studies), Wagga Wagga, NSW to make the publication of the index a permanent project of ANZTLA. The index now covers 70 theological journals published in Australia and New Zealand. It is published semi-annually, with annual cumulation. The index provides an alphabetical listing by author, with subject and biblical indexes leading back to the listings through a control number. It also includes a book review index.

Standards for Theological Libraries

The third conference of the association, like the first, was held in Australia's national capital in 1988, with an appropriate emphasis on the Australian bicentennial. One of the momentous decisions of this conference was the commitment to proceed with the publication of the *Australasian Religion Index*. Equally significant, however, was the finalisation of the standards document which had been in gestation for five years, the

concern for standards having been the key impetus behind the formation of the association. Although several people had a hand in drafting the document, in its final form it was mainly the work of Lawrence McIntosh and was finally adopted by ANZTLA 9 September 1988 (Pryor, 1988). It subsequently received endorsement by the Australian Library and Information Association (in 1989) and the New Zealand Library Association (in 1991). The standards cover objectives, governance and administration, staffing, finance and budgeting, delivery of services, collections, facilities, instruction, associations, and cooperation.

New Zealand Connection

1989 was the year in which the theological library movement came with full force to New Zealand. The original impetus towards the formation of a library association had all come from Australians and no New Zealand librarians had attended any of the preliminary meetings until the 1985 consultation, at which ANZTLA was established. At this meeting, the Kiwis soon made their presence felt, delivering a passionate plea for the inclusion of New Zealand in any plans and projects involving theological libraries and librarianship. Since then, there has been a solid representation of New Zealanders at all the ANZTLA conferences, and their needs and concerns have been impossible to ignore. In 1989 came their turn to host the conference. So it came about that nine Australians and fourteen New Zealanders came together on the magnificent campus of the College of St John the Evangelist, Auckland, for a conference, important not only for the high-class professional input and social activities it provided, but particularly for the boost it gave to theological librarianship in The Land of the Long White Cloud. The organisers had managed to round up almost the full complement of theological librarians in the country and followed the conference itself with the formation of the New Zealand chapter of ANZTLA (Zweck, 1989).

AULOTS

The *Australasian Union List of Serials in Theological Collections (AULOTS)* rates only a passing mention in the minutes of the 1990 annual meeting, with a resolution encouraging its distribution and use, but this brief mention belies the inestimable value that AULOTS has been to theological librarianship and theological research (Zweck, 1990). It had its origins in a union list of periodicals published in mimeograph format in 1975. When a new edition was required, the task was picked up by Hans Arns (soon to become the first secretary of ANZTLA); working with the aid of a computer, he edited the data sent in on 5 x 3 cards and had it published in hardcover by the National Catholic Research Council in 1983. Reacting to the rapid growth of both libraries and serial collections, ANZTLA decided in 1987 to undertake a revision. Again, Hans Arns took up the challenge of compiling it. The first task was to create an automated database from the data held from the earlier edition. Computer listings were compiled for all previously contributing libraries and sent out to them for updating. The resulting second edition was published by the Catholic Institute of Sydney in 1990 (Arns and Dacey, 1990). It contains locations and holdings information for 3339 periodicals in 85 collections in Australia and New Zealand. The value of such a research tool to theological libraries is obvious enough, but is especially important in the Australasian context, where the vast majority of libraries are not automated and have no access to the national bibliographic databases; however, AULOTS has become a vitally important research tool for academic and research libraries, which are the beneficiaries of most of the interlibrary loan traffic of theological libraries. It is currently being updated again.

User Education

User education in some form or other has always been an important aspect of theological librarianship, but the aim of the 1991 conference, held at Morling College, Sydney, NSW, with a record attendance of 52 participants, was to highlight the need to develop information literacy among theological students. Though Australasian theological

colleges have not seen the need to develop courses in information literacy, this conference did serve to establish user education on a more scholarly and scientific basis. Although the timing was purely coincidental, a conference with such an emphasis on user education was an appropriate occasion to introduce a proposal for a style manual for research and writing in the fields of theology and religion (Zweck, 1991). It was to take several years to bring to fruition.

Cooperation

Working together has also been a key objective of ANZTLA, and never was the aim more clearly focused than at the seventh annual conference at historic Luther Campus, North Adelaide, SA, in 1992. This was the conference which introduced theological librarians to the Conspectus and the concept of the Distributed National Collection, and the role they have to play in developing the facilities for nationwide cooperation. Gary Gorman also gave a lecture on the topic of collection evaluation and Mara Goodall and Gai Smith reported on the production of a cooperative collection development policy for the Sydney College of Divinity, the first such coordinated approach ever undertaken by theological libraries in this part of world (Zweck, 1992; Smith and Goodall, 1993). 1992 also saw the appearance of another important resource, *Collections of Religion and Theology in Australia and New Zealand.* While not, strictly speaking, a publication of ANZTLA, it was produced with the encouragement of ANZTLA and the input of its librarians and is proving a valuable resource for its libraries. Compiled by Coralie Jenkin and published by Auslib Press, it is a directory of more than 300 theological libraries and religious or theological collections in other libraries.

Mulitculturalism

When the eighth conference, held near the picturesque seaside resort of Napier, New Zealand (a city destroyed by earthquake in 1931 and rebuilt in the prevailing art-deco style), the main focus was on acquisitions, but the input from representatives of Asian and Pacific libraries made this ANZTLA's most multicultural conference. Not only did it introduce delegates to the literature of these neighbouring areas and the difficulties in acquiring it, but it also gave new insight into the progress and problems of the libraries. However, apart from substantial financial donations to specific projects in these areas, and sporadic efforts by various individuals, comparatively little has been done to achieve closer working relationships with our nearest neighbours (Zweck, 1993). As ANZTLA itself develops in maturity and stability, this is an area which hopefully will receive increasing emphasis.

Denominational Meetings

The Melbourne conference in 1994 attracted a new record attendance, subsequently equalled in Canberra in 1995, of 55 librarians. It was significant for the innovation of denominational meetings, which have since become a regular feature of ANZTLA conferences. It was recognized that there was considerable need for the multiplicity of denominational libraries to work more closely together, especially in the area of collection development. Another feature of this conference was the launch of Lawrence McIntosh's *A Style Manual for the Presentation of Papers and Theses in Religion and Theology* (McIntosh, 1994). As its title suggests, it is a style manual especially adapted to the needs of religious and theological research, offering a choice of note-bibliography and author-date methods, and taking special note of the prevailing style preferences being used and promoted by the Australian and New Zealand governments. It has been published by the Centre for Information Studies, in association with ANZTLA and ANZATS and has won widespread adoption by theological schools in both countries (Zweck, 1994).

Celebration

The tenth anniversary of the association was celebrated in grand style in the national capital of Australia in 1995, with the Executive Director of the American Theological Library Association as a special guest. The occasion was marked by two innovations and the publication of a Festschrift, the curious thing about all three events being their focus on one person, Lawrence McIntosh, who retired from his position as Librarian of the Joint Theological Library Melbourne and Coordinator of the Editorial Management Committee of the *Australasian religion index* at this time. The Festschrift, *'So great a cloud of witnesses',: libraries and theologies*, edited by Philip Harvey and Lynn Pryor, honours the outstanding contribution of McIntosh to theological librarianship, through his involvement with both the Joint Theological Library and ANZTLA. He was also considered a most worthy recipient of the first honorary life membership of the association, an honour inaugurated to mark the passing of the first decade of the association. The association had also decided to mark this stage in its development with the inauguration of an annual award for a single, outstanding contribution, by a librarian or a non-librarian, to theological librarianship. The association saw fit to make the first award also to McIntosh for the publication of his style manual. Two important decisions about the *Australasian religion index* were also made, both of which have been held up temporarily by technical problems. The first is to investigate with a commercial publisher the production of a hard copy edition of the first seven years of the index (minus the book reviews). The second is to investigate with the ATLA the production of a CDROM version of the index (Zweck, 1995).

3. Developments in Theological Libraries

It is obvious, from the foregoing, that there has been a considerable amount of library-related activity in the past decade - more than at any other time in the history of theological libraries in Australia and New Zealand. But what impact has all this activity had on the libraries themselves? Since statistics have been gathered for ten years now, from 1984 to 1994, it is possible to gain some kind of picture from the data collected. Comparisons are based on the published statistics for 1984 (Zweck, 1985b) and Group A statistics (in both cases, representing the ANZATS-related libraries) for 1994 (Greenwood, 1996).

ANZTLA LIBRARY STATISTICS 1984 -1994

Category	1984	1994	+/- %
One fulltime staff (EFT)	70%	71%	
One professional staff	35%	42%	
Average no. of staff (EFT)	1.5	1.67	11.3%
Loans (annual) (1988)	4368	5719	4.45%
ILL Borrowed (annual)	24	28	17%
ILL Lent (annual)	52	44	-15%
Monograph Acquisitions (annual)	974	1186	2.2%
Total Volumes	24945	36374	46%
Periodical Subscriptions	105	154	47%
Monograph Expenditure (annual)	$8990	$23858	15.4%
Periodical Expenditure (annual)	$3151	$9207	19.2%

Of forty reporting libraries in 1984, 28 (70%) had, in fulltime equivalents, one or more staff; in 1994, the figure was 22 out of 31 reporting libraries - the slightest possible increase to 71%. In 1984 fourteen libraries (35%) had one or more professional librarians; in 1994, the figure was thirteen, increasing the figure to 42% of reporting libraries. The actual average number of staff per library increased by only ten percent over the decade, from 1.5 to 1.67, in both cases almost equally divided between professionals and non professionals. These figures indicate a distinct lack of growth at a time when dramatic increases were needed.

Loan statistics are one of the best gauges of the growth of library activity; so it is unfortunate that a reliable method of counting such figures was not devised until 1988. However, in the six years from 1988 to 1994, average annual totals of loans increased from 4368 to 5719: an increase of 31%, or an average annual increase of 4.45% - at a time when staff numbers were increasing by an average of only one percent. During the ten years which are the main focus of this survey, the average number of interlibrary loans borrowed increased from 24 to 28 (a 17% increase), while the average number of interlibrary loans lent decreased from 52 to 44 (a decrease of 15%). However, it is worth noting that the overall average represents barely one item a week for the average library. (In terms of medians, the relevant figures are a very meagre twelve borrowed and ten lent, indicating that the main burden of interlibrary loan traffic is being borne by a small number of libraries.) It is also notable that the amount of interlibrary lending is more than 50% higher than the figure for borrowing, the main beneficiaries being academic and research libraries. The direction of interlibrary loan traffic is illustrated by the Lohe Memorial Library, which, in the past three years, has dealt with 38 university libraries, compared with 24 theological libraries and smaller numbers of public and special libraries.

In the ten years under review, the average number of monograph acquisitions grew from 974 to 1186, an average increase of 22%, or just 2.2% per annum. (It is also worth noting that, while the average number of acquisitions for 1994 is 1186, the median is only 721.) The number of libraries with total collections of more than 100,000 volumes increased from one to two, with the average total collection increasing by a healthy 46%, from 24945 to 36374 volumes and the average number of periodical subscriptions increasing by 47%, from 105 to 154. While the percentage increases in volume numbers and subscriptions sounds impressive, it must be borne in mind that total numbers are still quite modest and that there has been no appreciable increase in staff numbers to cope with the growth in the size of the collections.

Average expenditure increases also sound impressive, until compared with the astronomical cost price increases of books and periodicals. Average expenditures on monographs increased by 154% (15.4% per annum), from $8990 to $22858. Statistics collected by the Conference of Australian University Librarians indicate that between 1985 and 1994, the average cost of books was increasing by 9.7% per annum, suggesting that the increase in real terms of theological library acquisitions budgets was less than 6 per cent. (It is also notable that the median figure of $16000 is only 70% of the average of almost $23000.) At the same time, the average expenditures on periodicals increased by 192% (19.2% per annum), from $3151 to $9207; however, Conference of Australian University Librarians statistics indicate an average increase in periodical prices of 17.3% per annum, suggesting a negligible increase in real terms for theological library periodical budgets. Over the decade, the ratio of expenditures on books to periodicals shifted from 3:1 in favour of books to 2.5:1.

Statistics, of course, do not tell the whole story. They reveal very little about the quality of service provided. What they do suggest, however, is that a very small number of people is having to work a lot harder to maintain essential services. For what it is worth, anecdotal evidence suggests that library users are very appreciative of the intangible aspects of service, such as helpfulness, courtesy, and promptness, being offered by the staff of theological libraries, but such intangibles do not make up for the obvious lack of resources and technology required to provide a professional library service today.

4. Successes and Failures

What this survey of the past decade would suggest is that theological librarianship has come a long way, but that the progress of the libraries themselves is very much less impressive. In all this, most theological librarians would agree that ANZTLA is of vital importance to them. The association has opened up lines of communication, providing

valuable points of contact for mutual support and encouragement and for fostering a sense of the importance of theological librarianship as a profession. It has given leadership and direction to theological librarians, providing them with a focal point for voicing their concerns and their aspirations. It has been a major agency of professional enrichment, through its conferences and its newsletter. Its publications are providing a vital service to theological research and have won a position of respect in the wider library community. A decade of working together has won for ANZTLA an indispensable place in the theological community. While many challenges remain to be faced and many problems remain to be solved, ANZTLA has shown that it is capable of facing the issues and providing the leadership required by the theological library community.

At the same time, it is sobering to note that the fundamental problems facing theological libraries in Australia and New Zealand are the same today as they were a decade ago - chronic underfunding and understaffing, and, in many cases, a lack of adequate facilities and equipment. For the same reasons, the very professional agenda of ANZTLA (including the most up-to-date thinking on collection development, Conspectus, and the Distributed National Collection) has had comparatively little impact on the majority of individual libraries. One also has to look no further than the same circumstances to find the reasons why theological libraries have been some of the last to introduce automation, the vast majority having still not achieved it. So, while theological librarians acknowledge a need to become more aware of and more involved in the wider world of theological librarianship and, in particular, to forge closer links with their colleagues in Asia and the Pacific, it is not surprising that little has been achieved, when their own libraries are in such a parlous and underdeveloped condition.

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