

Libraries On The Move

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History of the Collections

In 1985 a cooperative agreement was made between the Perth College of Divinity and Murdoch University by which the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic and Uniting Churches would provide lecturers and theology courses within the University setting. Oversight would be provided by the University in a similar manner to existing programs at Flinders University in South Australia and Griffiths University in Queensland. Against this background a decision was made to integrate the vocational teaching and lay extension theology collections of the Anglican and Uniting Churches - the Anglican Institute of Theology (AIT) and the Uniting Church Perth Theological Hall (PTH) Library Collections - into Murdoch University Library. These two collections were located within walking distance of each other, near the University of Western Australia but 10 kms from the site of the theology program centred on Murdoch University.

In January 1994 in preparation for integration with the Murdoch collection over 35000 volumes were moved from their sites at St Stephens Nedlands (Anglican) and Ada Purnell Library in the Uniting Church's St Columba UWA residential College Nedlands. (AIT 10000 volumes and PTH 25000 volumes).

Reasons For Integration

The decision to combine and integrate with Murdoch University had not been taken lightly or swiftly. Over eight years of committees and discussions constitutes a considerable amount of negotiation. The collections had outgrown their accommodation. The new site would provide room for the collections to breathe and grow. The churches faced serious challenge in their ability to manage, finance and adequately preserve and develop their collections. Already the collections had their own histories of amalgamations and bequests from past rationalisations. Avoidance of further wasteful duplication between the two collections, and a firmer financial footing for future collection development and staffing, were hoped for. But the prime reason for integration was to support the theology teaching program and the concept of a new theology centre being developed in association with Murdoch University. The move aimed at establishing a single site support for theological education of priests, ministers, students and lay people for the two churches contributing their collections and to do so within the context of the Perth College of Divinity. Research/reading materials and information would be accessible through computerised access, and for all library clients over longer hours and with better access to extended Information Services. Quite an amount of cross disciplinary interest was aroused. There would be greater potential for utilising the University's management and maintenance expertise, better physical conditions for the collections and professional development and support for theology library staff.

Preparation and Planning

Careful negotiation between the three institutions and the Perth College of Divinity had preceded the move. The churches' collections represented a big financial and emotional investment to them. Dedications and frontal donation plates of many books told of ministers and lay donors, many of them well known people in the church community - faithful scholars and readers of theology, ordained and lay, who had retired or died or

had downsized shelving space. There was evidence too of several previous ecumenically motivated amalgamations of collections.

Many issues had to be clarified in the fine tuning of the agreement details between the representatives of each church and the university. For example, in the case of the Uniting Church collection, a transfer agreement was drawn up. Concerns had to be addressed over how broad or specific to make the terms of agreement. In the document conditions are outlined with 'permanent gift' terms where the University assumes ownership of the collection after 25 years. Consideration had to be given to what would happen to collection components if, for any reason theology should cease to be a teaching program at Murdoch at any time in the future. This issue alone made it necessary to place ownership plates in all incoming books, and electronically tag all computerised records, relating to the incoming collections and purchases made with the churches' funding. Guidelines had to be established on what to do with items in excess to needs after integration. Details of funding had to be projected - the responsibility to be shared by the PCD, the churches, DEET and the University. Preparation of staff had to be made regarding changes that would be necessary to cope with the additional load, strategies devised to facilitate integration and cooperation between incoming theology staff and Murdoch staff and arrangements put in place for ongoing funding to support increased commitments.

Adjusting to the Idea of Integration

From the churches' point of view there was some initial concern. There was of course the original major decision to move the theology collections from the "sacred" to the "secular" context. Another set of issues related to moving from a traditional one person library style of operation to a far more technologically sophisticated academic library situation. There was too the risk associated with fitting into a bigger system. It was always acknowledged that there would be a measure of lost autonomy over the control of future directions of collections previously owned unequivocally. In the area of funding and financing it was recognised in transfer agreements that continued contribution of the churches would be necessary to supplement university funding in financing continued development of the collections. Reclassification of the collections from the theology-specialised Pettee to Dewey was necessary in the interests of uniformity with the rest of Murdoch's collection and to allow items added to be entered into the automated catalogue. The biggest cost factor lay here.

Problems Associated With the Physical Move and Integration

Although well prepared, when the word for the actual move came, it all had to be accomplished fairly quickly. The Anglican collection had to make way for an incoming collection of parish resource material to its premises. It was professionally packed and moved quickly into temporary storage in the Murdoch Library basement. When level of duplication could be determined, the materials for inclusion in Murdoch would be prepared. Access was to be through card catalogues and items requested from the basement were to be priority catalogued when a patron requested a loan.

The Uniting Church collection was to be moved directly onto a floor of the library as a manual loans/card catalogued/different classification system/special collection/subset of Murdoch Library. For its first year, it would continue to operate as a traditional, one person library within a technologically sophisticated University Library setting. It was to have its own Theology Librarian and assistant with its own loans and information services and primitive manual systems for its initial year. This collection was to have identification bookplates and electronic security tattle tapes in all books prior to packing. Gradually as integration proceeded, patrons would find firmer reliance on Murdoch materials, as the balance between Pettee and Dewey classified items tipped to favour Dewey.

Moving the Uniting Church collection was done by volunteers to save as much money as possible for the integration process. Members of a nearby parish provided the majority of the 56 individuals who helped prepare, pack and move the library and to stocktake it at the Murdoch end. Many gave the equivalent of a five day working week of their time. The only consideration they received was the enticing morning and afternoon teas and lunches provided to fuel them on and the grateful thanks of the Perth Theological Hall staff and students.

Nine months of preparation had gone into identifying ownership of library resources and separating the integrated card catalogue for the four collections housed in the Ada Purnell library. The collections of the two University of Western Australia residential colleges of St Columba and Kingswood and the Goethe Society Collection were to remain in Ada Purnell.

Anyone who has moved collections knows the planning, preparation and physical hard work involved in "moving libraries". An estimation had to be made of the number of books to be transferred from the collections and how many shelves would be needed to receive them. The proportioning out of number ranges of the receiving shelves had to be calculated, made more difficult by the fact that two collections and several separate sequences had to be merged eventually. Measurements were taken of the card catalogue records, books were counted per cm of cards, the average number of books per shelf calculated and charts drawn up for placement of sequences to be integrated. Ultimately only one major readjustment was necessary.

We started then with gratis people, gratis boxes, and much goodwill. There was initial training with step by step instruction sheets, dusting, checking, book-plating, tattle-taping, packing to a pattern, keeping in sequence and labelling of boxes by Dewey ranges, order sequence and colour coding. Appropriate placement at the Murdoch end was done by the regular 8 hour per week assistant, working full time for the duration of the exercise!

Once on the new site, the Uniting Church's Perth Theological Hall collection was implanted into the Murdoch collection as planned. Immediate work was needed for signposting and labelling to differentiate the three manual catalogues and the Pettee Collection. There was need to introduce new users of the Pettee system to its interesting intricacies and to introduce traditional users of Pettee to the Dewey System. We need to promote self help as a priority. Many clients were used to special library/individual attention and ways of smoothing the transition were necessary. The AIT collection (with the 10,000 items which were not tattle taped that had been placed in storage in the basement) needed procedures put in place to advertise their existence and to enable those items to be brought efficiently into the Murdoch library system as required. Borrowing rights for clergy, lay people, different categories of students and users of the previous collections had to be established that were standard with Murdoch's existing policies. As a large institution, Murdoch had a number of firmly established rules, an example of which was that country clergy, and country clients generally did not fit with Murdoch's policy of mailing resources only to their own externally enrolled students. Appropriate arrangements for identifying sources of funding and the setting up of separate accounting and identification of items relating to each institution was necessary. A Theology Loans / Enquiries desk with desensitiser was set up conveniently close to the theology collections with special provision for 9-5 pm staffing. This area had its own computer catalogue terminal for accessing materials progressively being integrated. Initially this terminal was useful for training traditional, bewildered patrons in using an electronic catalogue, using the Dewey System and in appropriate searching techniques.

Methodology For Integration

The Perth Theological Hall and Anglican Institute collections were moved in January 1994. It had been suggested that the basic materials would be integrated within 6 months. However, the timing of the actual move from the University's point of view

was not good. Murdoch was replacing its old cataloguing system mid 1994 with the Innovative INNOPAC catalogue. In any case the old system didn't have the capacity to accommodate the number of books in the two incoming collections. By the time Murdoch staff had accomplished preparation and training of supervisors, installation of the new system, fine tuning and testing of the new system, training of other staff and patrons in its use and catching up on resulting backlogs of deferred routine work, it was September 1994 before training of theology cataloguing staff and the integration cataloguing was seriously under way.

A pilot study was conducted in order to predict the number of matching records which could be captured locally from the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN) database, and use this information to plan timing and staffing. The result was that 71% of the books were predicted to need copy cataloguing, 26% original cataloguing/cloning and 3% of the records were insufficiently clear to assess.

A Theology Project Plan was prepared to lay out procedures for dealing with the procedures of the integration, including those for non-theology material, duplicates, discards and serials. Funding for serials integration was not readily available and so serials were to be dealt with as a special issue. Significant runs were set up in title order within the library and other runs stored in the basement. In the initial year Perth Theological Hall continued its subscriptions. Gradual transfer of subscriptions to Murdoch's supplier with billing and addressing to be transferred to Murdoch occurred as subscriptions fell due throughout 1995. Cataloguing of each serial title and its back runs occurred on receipt of first confirming issue under the new arrangement. The newly catalogued serial would then be removed from the Pettee title runs and reappear in the regular Murdoch Dewey Serial runs. The serial title, its holding range and other detail was then electronically searchable. The library now has 70 significant serials subscriptions catalogued and 168 titles. The index to serials information through the purchase of the ATLA CD ROM Religion Database provided a new impetus to undergraduates and researchers.

Monthly theology planning meetings were held between heads of information, bibliographic services, systems management, circulation, social sciences/humanities and the theology librarian. Regular finance and acquisition reports were made available through the management function of the new INNOPAC system.

What Has Been Achieved To Date?

By the end of 1994 sufficient numbers of core materials had been catalogued to close the temporary theology loans and inquiry area. This freed the theology librarian to be involved in general reference and information service tasks in the normal context of the Social Sciences/Humanities Subject Librarians Group while still remaining the Theology Subject Specialist Librarian. From January 1995 theology loans of integrated material were all done in the standard Murdoch manner through the automated library INNOPAC system from the normal library loans desk. Where items were still Pettee classified there was an emergency "on the fly" system on INNOPAC for temporarily registering a book and its loan details. If the patron was prepared to wait a day or so for an uncatalogued item, a special "rush" procedure for cataloguing was undertaken.

Currently there are over 15000 monograph titles and 20000 volumes which have been added to the INNOPAC Catalogue in the Dewey 200's range on INNOPAC. In the best month over 1000 volumes were catalogued of which 850 were copy cataloguing and about 100 clones/original cataloguing. For the year 1995 nearly 8000 volumes were catalogued of which about 6400 were copy cataloguing of titles and 500 were clones/original cataloguing. Due to staffing constraints nearly 2000 items not on ABN and identified for original cataloguing have been placed in store in the basement. 10000 or more other items are awaiting decisions on retention and cataloguing.

The Future

By September 1995 most of the theology project funds had been exhausted. Sifting, sorting and steady collection building is continuing. From the University's stand point, the integration project is realising most of its initial objectives. Many of the advantages of integration - to the theology programme, to Murdoch University and to users of the theology collections as already outlined - have already been realised. Advantages of access have been a big plus though many research items remain to be catalogued. As more of the rare and older items, and the original cataloguing monographs stored in the basement are made available, the research value of the collection will be greatly enhanced. The benefits of being part of a larger organisation with extended resources for management and maintenance of its collections, better collection development resources and improved access to information networks are becoming increasingly evident as technology blooms. Increased networking and electronic links with other collections and information sources will continue. CD-ROM and electronic databases, indexing and use of the Internet has improved access to information on the existence and availability of a wide range of the literature. Co-operation with other theology libraries is occurring as more theology libraries use email and Internet facilities for exchange of news, information and resources.

The moving of the libraries of the Uniting Church Perth Theological Hall and the Anglican Institute of Theology, and the integration of their theology collections into Murdoch University Library, has in the main been accomplished. The project has enjoyed continued cooperation between the University and the churches over financial, staffing and philosophical issues. Murdoch has added a significant new subject specialisation resource to its library - a sound general and undergraduate collection in theology with depth and scope in its particular teaching areas of theology - Old and New Testament Studies, Systematic Theology, Church History and Pastoral Theology. Resources for research level students are building up. This integration of two church-sponsored collections into the Murdoch University Library is fulfilling its promise of providing an attractive focus and resources base for the study of theology.

And it is well so, because there is a tradition of excellence to live up to at Murdoch. When the distinguished Western Australian academic and literary figure, Sir Walter Murdoch, was asked on his deathbed in the 70's, if he would lend his name to the new Western Australian University, he is reported as saying "Yes...but it had better be a good one!"

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