

Measuring up to User Expectations

At one session of the conference three representatives of library users presented short papers on their expectations of the services of a theological library. Here we publish two of those papers.

Part 1: A Wish List of an Undergraduate Student

James Matthews

- Helpful staff
- Easy to find books (containing the right answers)
- Reverse cycle air-conditioning

Human Resources

Staff to:

- conduct orientation courses
- answer student queries
- process interlibrary loans
- maintain displays
- reshelve books
- make repairs and maintain equipment
- lend stationery, inspire goodwill, and counsel stressed-out students

Information Technologies

Printed:

- Material representing full spectrum of theological views
- Newsletters - mission and other parachurch agencies
- Newspapers - denominational and major national papers
- Contemporary journals (with no volumes missing!)
- Transcripts/proceedings of important conferences (on microfiche?)

Electronic:

- Audiocassettes - lectures, sermons, language learning aids
- Video presentations
- CD ROM facilities
- Internet access
- Computerised cataloguing system

General:

- social commentaries by secular observers
- contemporary journals
- contemporary social comment by Christian observers
- access to other libraries' catalogues - with full reciprocal borrowing rights.
- holy books and religious literature of other religions
- encyclopaedia
- fiction (Christian and secular)

- children's literature
- photocopying facilities in sound-proofed but ventilated room
- loan period in proportion to the size of the library
- realistic penalties for overdue loans
- anti-theft system

Environment

- well ventilated, maintained at ambient temperature
- rooms for group work, watching videos, listening to audiocassettes
- quiet areas for individual study
- accessible between 6 am and 12 midnight

James Matthews

Student, Bible College of Queensland

Part 2: What I want from a Library

Rosemary Gill

Back in the days when Brisbane was very much the poor cousin of the southern capitals, a friend of mine said of our city, 'Why complain? It's a comfortable place to work, and a convenient place from which to travel.' If there is a general observation I would make about what I want from a library, it would resemble that description of Brisbane: a comfortable place to work, and a convenient place from which to travel - via the most modern technology - to interstate and overseas library catalogues.

I'll talk first about the comfort factor, then touch briefly on the technology, and shall end with a short 'wish list' of what I want from a library.

What makes a library comfortable for me, for a teacher, specifically a teacher of Church History? Creature comforts aside, there are four areas I want to mention, all of which relate directly to the librarian.

1. The first involves a librarian who actively encourages me to recommend library purchases for my teaching area: Susan does that in a couple of ways. She herself makes available to me current catalogues from relevant publishers. I mark the books I want for the library (and any I want to order for myself), and return them to her. (And yes, we sometimes have to discuss cost.)

Susan also supports the practice of one of our wonderful library volunteers who gives me photocopied indices from journals in which I've expressed an interest. In that way I can follow through book reviews which sound promising; and this in turn leads to further purchases being made for my area of teaching. In short, I'm encouraged to cooperate in building up the library, in a way which helps my own teaching, and I'm thanked for investing time and thought in doing so.

2. The second factor which makes a library comfortable for me is a librarian who keeps me informed about the arrival of books I've ordered. Susan does that by giving me what is usually a monthly print-out of books catalogued. That has the advantage of letting me know what is now available on the shelves, and giving me the reference numbers for the new purchases. This means that I can use new books as promptly as possible for teaching purposes. It also lets me know about other books which may touch on my teaching area; and books in which I am simply interested.

3. The third comfort factor is ensured by a librarian who is happy to consult with me - and other faculty members - about the appropriate cataloguing of a book which seems to cross teaching areas, or 'Fields' as they're called in the Brisbane College of Theology. This is another important way of keeping me informed about what the library has to offer to me and my students; and it stops 'black holes' from forming in the collection - books relevant to my area, which might languish untouched and unread in sections of the library which I rarely consult.
4. The fourth way in which the librarian makes a library comfortable for me is by keeping me up to date with copyright laws. St. Francis' College was reviewed by Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) last year. Staff sanity was preserved by Susan and the other BCT librarians questioning CAL spokespeople until we finally had a statement, in plain English, setting out what is, and what is not, legal photocopying for me in my teaching role. Copyright laws are rightly very punitive; and it is a great relief for me to have that statement to which to refer. It adds to my comfort as a library user generally and particularly as a teacher who needs to provide photocopied material for students.

Technology now, specifically the sort that lets me track titles and authors interstate and overseas. Well, I need it! For me, a research library without that resource is like a house without a telephone. It can be easy for a Church Historian to feel isolated, or at least at a disadvantage, in Australia: I teach a great deal of European history, to help students here understand their faith roots and claim their denominational memory, warts and all. I need resources to illustrate, as well as explain, the history of countries which many of my students have not visited, and traditional ways of life and inherited beliefs and prejudices which are very hard for them to grasp. As Australian society becomes less and less Euro-centric (let alone Anglo-centric), I find that the more modern of these resources are not always readily available in this country. I want my library to help me track them down.

My wish list: a way for my library to fast-track overseas book orders; ditto for interlibrary loans: there are only fourteen weeks in a semester, the inter-semester breaks are far from being the times of leisure one could desire, and delay in a much-needed book or article arriving can cause considerable problems in the planning of lectures and class reading. One of the units which I teach deals with the Medieval Church, so I wish for my library to find the wherewithal to build up a CD-ROM or a microfilm manuscript collection, or the capacity to tap into collections held elsewhere, to help once again overcome that tyranny of distance.

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News and Notes

The amalgamation of St Barnabas College, St Francis Xavier College and Parkin-Wesley College is now well under way. The Head Librarian of the new campus library has now been announced: **Beth Pryor**, formerly of Salisbury TAFE. Beth takes up her appointment on September 15th. The libraries of St Francis Xavier and Parkin-Wesley libraries will shift to the new location after November 7th.

Marj Saunders has resigned from Burleigh College library and will be replaced by **Teresa Atkinson** at the beginning of 1998.