

"Who is on the Lord's side?": theological libraries on the edge

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ABSTRACT

Theological libraries in Australia are being drawn from the edge into the mainstream of libraries, through the forces of technology, education and ecumenism. Activities of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association and the Libraries Committee of the Sydney College of Divinity illustrate this trend. The paper concludes with a vision of the future for theological libraries in Australia.

Introduction

Theological libraries have long experienced a low profile among Australian libraries. Although amongst the oldest libraries in this country, they are only now being drawn into the mainstream of Australian libraries. The forces of the higher education sector, the impact of technology and ecumenical activities among the churches are changing the role of theological libraries in Australia. Collaborative resource-sharing activities of the Sydney College of Divinity libraries are discussed. The paper concludes with a vision for the future of theological libraries in this country.

Categories of Theological Libraries

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).¹ In Australia the great majority of theological libraries support theological education in branches of the Christian Church² and the paper focuses upon these libraries.

Collections of historical significance

Theological libraries are among the oldest libraries in Australia, containing historical collections that can be traced back to the earliest days of settlement in the colony. The efforts to spread the gospel by early figures such as Rev Richard Johnson, and Father Therry were assisted by supporters shipping donations of religious books to the colony.³ One such Diocesan Library is described:

[It] was supported from Britain by donations from Dr. Bray's Lending Library for the Colonies, beautiful leather bound books with rules for reporting annually to London on the use of the collection.⁴

Training of clergy was undertaken using these donated sets of books, now housed in various collections. Catholic religious orders, such as the French Marists, brought significant works in languages other than English.⁵

Theological library collections in this country form a significant component of the Distributed National Collection, containing valuable, rare and unique humanities and social sciences resources not duplicated in other collections. However at the present time, most of these resources are not listed as part of the Distributed National Collection and remain invisible.

Scale of Australian theological libraries

Theological libraries support the objectives of their parent bodies which are a variety of theological educational institutions.

In terms of size, there are two major collections of more than 120,000 volumes - Joint Theological Library at Ormond College in University of Melbourne and the Library of Moore Theological College in Sydney. The third significant collection is the Lohe Library at Luther Seminary in Adelaide. There is a second tier of institutions with collections of approximately 80,000 items, such as Veech Library at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, St. Mark's National Theological Library in Canberra, and the Library at Corpus Christi College in Clayton, Victoria.

The majority of collections are smaller than this and range from small church libraries to a group of libraries with collections of about 50,000 items.^{6 7} There are approximately 100 theological libraries in Australia and New Zealand.⁸

Collecting areas

Theological library collections comprise holdings in essential fields such as biblical studies and biblical languages, philosophy, systematic and pastoral theology, ethics, religion, church history, worship, liturgics and spirituality. However the scope of collecting has expanded to incorporate media and cultural studies, aboriginal studies, anthropology, literature, women's studies, media studies and Australian studies which are often also represented in theological library collections.

The Christian Church has a great tradition of learning and contemporary research draws upon the wisdom of the past. Therefore, publications from previous eras retain a legitimate place in theological collections.⁹ There is a notable difference between theological and other types of special libraries, where currency can be a vital criteria for retention of material.

Importance of serials

The serials holdings add significantly to the breadth and depth of collections, and the latest debate on current topics of interest will be found in the Australian and overseas journals. Most of the theological libraries expend approximately 20% of their acquisitions budget on serials¹⁰ with titles less expensive than those of subject areas such as medicine.

Expanding range of formats of materials collected

Modern collecting includes non-book material, available in a huge variety of formats, competing for acquisitions funds. In many institutions, videos are favoured by teaching staff as more effective communication tools for the younger generation. Many collections include wall-charts, maps, overhead transparencies, computer software, audio and video-cassettes and kits available for loan in addition to monographs.

Technology

A range of automated systems has been employed in theological libraries across Australia; more libraries use Dynix than any of the other automation systems.¹¹ An automated system changes library work flows and improves the efficiency of operations. A number of the larger libraries are full members of Australian Bibliographic Network, and this is utilized by smaller theological libraries for copy-cataloguing, finding locations and other applications.

There are still retrospective conversions underway in many theological libraries, unable to obtain special funding to expedite the process. Some libraries have used OCLC and Library of Congress CD-ROM for copy-cataloguing to complete their retrospective conversions.¹²

At the Centre for Ministry, installation of an ethernet local area network has recently linked together all the offices within the Centre for Ministry building, including the four Schools.¹³ Upon completion of this project, library users from the Synod offices and beyond will be able to search the library catalogue through an Internet connection. This is a major improvement in service delivery, especially for geographically remote users in rural areas, with no other library access.

Electronic mail and access to the Internet are proving as useful for theological libraries, as in other sectors. In particular, the ANZTLA-Forum, an electronic Listserv maintained by the Joint Theological Library through Melbourne University, is proving a valuable forum for the exchange of ideas, solving tricky reference inquiries and a useful networking tool for those who have access.¹⁴ The Internet has a number of sites useful for the latest research for religious topics - the Dead Sea Scrolls, or Papal Pronouncements from the Vatican, or Inter-Faith Dialogue between Jews and Christians, or the latest from the Jesus site, to name several. Faith traditions from all parts of the world can be located on the Net.

Indexing and abstracting tools

Theological libraries need to provide access to major American and European indexing and abstracting tools, and a number of essential resources are now available on CD-ROM and the Internet. Resources providing coverage of the periodical literature in major European languages are published by the American Theological Libraries Association, the University of Tübingen and other key publishers. The availability of these tools raises further challenges in document delivery for Australian theological libraries.

Education

The historical development of theological education in Australia occurring in seminaries and colleges, is beyond the scope of this paper. The provision of theological education in the various states differs between denominations and Catholic religious orders.¹⁵

A number of Colleges of Divinity and Theology have developed, to facilitate government recognition of the awards offered by theological education providers. Such accreditation requires standards of excellence in teaching, quality assurance measures and evaluation of the internal monitoring of course delivery. An important component is the capacity of the library to support a collection of sufficient scope and specificity for the level of awards being offered. A number of the theological institutions have developed close associations with universities for mutual benefit.¹⁶ Joint or partnership awards are offered by the theological institutions in conjunction with universities, such as the joint B.A./B.Th. from Sydney University and the Sydney College of Divinity.

The Catholic orders and Protestant denominations have also queried the effectiveness of theological education processes in Australian institutions. Shifting dynamics between clergy and laity, the quest for contextual theologies which are meaningful for women, ethnic congregations, aboriginal Christians and other minority groups create additional pressures on library services. A large proportion are private students, working towards theological qualifications, not

ordination. All these people make further demands on library services. They are likely to require the library to be open in the evenings, and at weekends; they copy large volumes of material; they require multiple copies of key texts; they are likely to be registered with a number of libraries simultaneously; they are keen to attend short intensive courses, which can be scheduled amongst other priorities; they are computer-literate; they become proficient at exploiting catalogues and indexing tools; they make effective use of their time in libraries. They seek individual assistance from library staff, and make them work for them also!¹⁷ Postgraduate students who seek material during the research phase of thesis investigations can be the most demanding library users, demanding collections similar to university libraries in depth and breadth, and high expectations of quality service delivery from library staff.

Around the country, librarians have responded to these demands - by attempting to provide services such as specialist research methodology and information literacy sessions; small group training in use of subject headings, thesauri, indexing and abstracting tools; CD-ROM searching; preparation of Pathfinders to introduce subject areas, specialized subject searching of both monograph and serial literature to assist distance education students; and longer loan periods for postgraduate students; reciprocal borrowing arrangements between theological and university libraries; and the development of holdings on pedagogy and adult learning styles; and review and evaluation of library collections by independent subject specialists.

ECUMENISM¹⁸

Jaroslav Pelikan asserts there is nothing so ecumenical as the library.¹⁹ A primary objective of collection-building is to provide a variety of viewpoints and perspectives in order to facilitate critical thinking. This encompasses a range of resources from Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, liberal through to fundamentalist perspectives represented in the theological library collection. The sacred writings of other religions are necessary to support research in comparative religion, and secular writings on ecological issues to support ecological theology research.

Maryanne Confoy describes the ecumenical nature of theological education as a mechanism to aid the marginalised to move into the mainstream in Australian society, in writing about women in theological education.²⁰

Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association

Theological libraries have been drawn together through the formation and development of the Association (ANZTLA) over the past twelve years.²¹

Activities of the Association include the development of ANZTLA Standards, currently under revision; compilation, organization, editing and publication of the *Australasian Religion Index*, now in its eighth volume; updating of the essential tool for all theological libraries, the *Australasian Union List of Theological Serials*; regular publication of the *ANZTLA Newsletter*; annual gatherings in each capital city for the ANZTLA Conference, and annual compilation of comprehensive statistics on activities of Australian and New Zealand theological libraries.

Each state Chapter meets regularly, with networking and mutual encouragement and support. Further publications with ANZTLA oversight have included a Festschrift in honour of Lawrence McIntosh, his publication of a style manual for the preparation of papers in religion and theology in Australia, and most recently his very useful work on Reference sources in theological collections.²²

In its early years, ANZTLA benefited from the leadership of professionals such as Rev. Trevor Zweck and Dr Lawrence McIntosh, providing direction to the Association. Their vision is being extended, as the Association continues to further the cause of theological libraries.

Theological libraries of the Sydney College of Divinity

The Sydney College of Divinity is a community created through a federation of Christian theological education providers for the accreditation of awards. The Member Institutions of the College commit themselves to sustaining a teaching programme of excellence. The College is committed to the study of theology, inclusive of a vocational orientation, and is both diverse in its theological traditions and inclusive in its functioning.²³ Courses offered by the SCD range from Certificate level through to Doctoral level, with a wide range of faith traditions represented in the SCD.²⁴

The provision of library resources adequate to undergird the curriculum needs of the Member Institutions and to meet the research needs of faculty and students, is implicit in the objectives and mission of the Sydney College of Divinity. Staff from each Member Institution library participate in Libraries Committee activities. The co-operative efforts are described below.

- 1) The Libraries Committee first prepared and published a Joint Collection Development Policy about seven years ago. A revised edition of this Policy was published in July 1997.²⁵ This project has required close evaluation of each library collection utilising the Conspectus methodology, and determining the Future Collection Intensity for each subject area in the collection, in consultation with library stakeholders and user groups. A later stage of the project involved lengthy consultation across all the libraries about subject areas collected at Level 4.²⁶ Australian Guidelines have been published to assist in the preparation of policy for collecting in an individual library.²⁷ However, this collaboration to develop a single policy of cohesive collection development for all the libraries is quite a significant undertaking and a unique publication held by the Conspectus office at the National Library.²⁸
- 2) A Union Catalogue of the holdings of the libraries was developed and maintained for the period 1984-1994. This was a seminal period in the life of the SCD, and the many drawers of that catalogue are located at the Camden Theological Library. The automation of that card catalogue, or production of a CD-ROM catalogue is currently under investigation.
- 3) Rationalisation of serial titles occurs only after consultation, to ensure that unique or rare titles are not lost to the nation. Serials holdings are consolidated by exchange and duplicates lists.
- 4) The SCD Libraries Committee assists the librarians in each of the Member Institutions, supporting professional standards, upholding decisions taken by the library staff, and acting as a point of reference, especially for new librarians, and staff of one-person libraries. Such vital support builds cohesion as a group and reduces professional isolation.
- 5) The Convenor of the Libraries Committee is a Member of the Academic Board of the Sydney College of Divinity, providing liaison between the Board and the Libraries Committee as one of its committees. This is an important role in maintaining the profile of the libraries in the work of the SCD, in supporting the activities of the SCD, and responding to the inquiries from Board members, both from SCD institutions and from external representatives of universities.

6) Each library displays the SCD policy statement on Library matters in the public area.²⁹ A list of addresses and opening hours for all the libraries is available. Reciprocal borrowing arrangements enable students and faculty to use and freely borrow from all library collections within the SCD.

7) The SCD Libraries Committee has negotiated Reciprocal Borrowing Arrangements with some of the university libraries, for borrowing privileges for higher degree students and members of teaching faculty.³⁰ This is very useful for Masters students conducting research on topics in a number of disciplines.

8) As part of the process for institutions applying for membership of the SCD, members of the Libraries Committee visit the Library, meet with staff and prepare a report. This evaluation of the library, collection, services and facilities assesses the capacity to support the courses being offered through the Sydney College of Divinity. The current ANZTLA Standards for Theological Libraries are used as a yard-stick in such investigations.³¹ The Report by the Libraries Committee members is submitted along with other documentation to the Council of the SCD, and is a recognition of the role of the library in supporting the institutional objectives.

Outcomes

- Staff of the Member Institution libraries have a sense of cohesion, working together for one organisation.
- Two editions of the Joint Collection Development Policy document have now been produced, with information to raise awareness of other institutional collections. The Table of Subject Strengths³² indicates subject areas collected at Research level, and this can be a useful guide for requesting Interlibrary Loans. A list of all the monographic series on standing order³³ across all the libraries has been compiled, together with a list of Indexing and Abstracting tools available in various formats.³⁴ Access to such information about all the collections is particularly useful for higher degree students.
- The SCD provides a framework for joint activities, while ensuring the autonomy of the individual member institutions. Each librarian takes an active role in the life of their own college, and the SCD supports this involvement. SCD participation strengthens the standing of the librarian in their own institution.

Distinctiveness of theological libraries

One of the essential differences between theological and other types of libraries is "the faith element". It should not be assumed that personal faith is a prerequisite for employment in a theological library. It is true that many library staff feel that they have been called by God to their work and that they do have a strong sense of purpose in assisting people to deepen their understanding and faith through access to library resources and services.

The future

Some major themes in theological librarianship in Australia today have been surveyed. Technological changes have enabled theological libraries to improve access to collections and services. Many students using theological libraries are lay people with a passion for making their Christian faith more relevant to the wider community at a time when ordained ministry

seems less effective than in the past. These people see theological education as a vital component in their vision. Theological libraries and their continuing development are therefore the 'life-blood' of such a mission. The activities of ANZTLA have brought significant improvements to theological libraries. For the libraries involved in consortia such as the Sydney College of Divinity, the response to the question "Who is on the Lord's side?" must be "The Member Institution Theological Libraries are 'on the Lord's side'."

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1. Jenkin, Coralie, (1995) "Channeling the gushing stream : theological libraries in Australia." Ph.D. Thesis Monash University (not yet published). p.12
2. Jenkin, Coralie (1992), compiler. *Collections of religion and theology in Australia and New Zealand*. Adelaide: Auslib Press. Collections from other faith traditions are included eg. Buddhist.
3. Jenkin (1995) Appendix I contains a list of the religious works brought to the colony by Rev Richard Johnson. These included 200 books of Catechisms, 200 books of Sermons etc.
4. Macpherson, Margaret "Interring the remains, or resurrection: dealing with dying theological libraries." *ANZTLA Newsletter*, no.27, Dec. 1995, p.25
5. The library collections at Moore Theological College, Catholic Theological Union and Catholic Institute of Sydney, located in Sydney have significant Rare Book collections from these sources.
6. See details under heading 'Collection' in Jenkins (1992).
7. from members of Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association [ANZTLA] provide useful data for comparison. These comprehensive statistics are published in the April issue of the *ANZTLA Newsletter* each year.
8. Figures are difficult to obtain; however the latest edition of the *Australasian Union List Of Theological Serials* comprises entries from 94 libraries. AULOTS is discussed in more detail on following pages. Melbourne: ANZTLA, 1997: iv Scope.
9. For a wide-ranging discussion on the role of the theological library, including description as 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic', see Graeme Garrett's Keynote Address from the ANZTLA Conference Canberra, 21 September 1995, reprinted as "The theology of a theological library". *ANZTLA Newsletter*, no.27, Dec. 1995, pp11-16.
10. See section on Expenditure in the Statistical Returns for further information.
11. The annual ANZTLA Statistics include data on automation systems.
12. eg. Colin Library at Catholic Theological Union, Hunter's Hill, NSW.
13. These are the United Theological College, the ELM Centre (Education for Lay Ministries), the School of Continuing Education and the Institute for Mission. The Camden Theological Library provides information services to these schools and people associated with the Centre for Ministry. In addition, the Institute for Pastoral Counselling and the Institute for Theology and the Arts are associated with the Centre for Ministry community.
14. At present, there are about 50% who have access, but this ratio changes rapidly.
15. For useful recent material on this subject, see Treloar, G. (ed.) (1997). "The furtherance of religious beliefs: essays on the history of theological education in Australia." Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity and the Evangelical History Association of Australia.
16. Note those such as St. Mark's Canberra providing the School of Theology for Charles Sturt University, Adelaide College of Divinity and the Flinders University.
17. I am indebted to the Postgraduate presenter Mrs Meryl Pringle, at a session on User Services, at the most recent ANZTLA Conference, Trinity Theological College, Auchenflower Queensland on Saturday 5th July 1997, for a presentation confirming my own observations about part-time students and their use of libraries. The same session included an informal survey with ratings for the effectiveness of service delivery to undergraduate, postgraduate and faculty users. Scores for postgraduates were considerably lower than the other two groups, with results consistent across states and denominations.
18. "... the word *ecumenism* began to be used to signify a concern to reunite the divided Christian family". Robert McAfee Brown on "The Ecumenical Movement", in Mircea Eliade (ed.) (1987). *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. v.5. New York: Macmillan. p.18.
19. Pelikan, Jaroslav (1992). *The idea of a university: a re-examination*. New Haven: Yale. p.117.
20. Mary Confoy "Women in theological education" in Peter Malone (ed.) (1987). *Discovering an Australian theology*. Homebush: St.Paul's Publications. p.100-103.
21. More detail about the achievements of ANZTLA can be found in the following: Zweck, Trevor "Australian and New Zealand theological libraries and librarianship today: the impact of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association in its first decade." *ANZTLA Newsletter* no.31, April 1997, p.2-12.
22. Full citations in bibliography.
23. Mission statement of the Sydney College of Divinity and statement of purpose of the Joint Collection Development Policy from *Joint Collection Development Policy document*. Carlingford: SCD, 1997. p.4.

24. These are the following: Catholic Institute of Sydney, Centre for Christian Spirituality (Catholic), Churches of Christ Theological College, Catholic Theological Union, Emmaus Bible College (Brethren), St. Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological Centre, St. Mark's National Theological Centre, Canberra (Anglican), St. Paul's National Seminary, Uniting Church Centre for Ministry and Wesley Institute for Ministry and the Arts (Uniting Church in Australia).
25. For information about purchase of copies, contact the author.
26. See information about Level 0 - (Out of Scope) to Level 5 - (Comprehensive) in Section 3: "Standard Collection Definitions in the Conspectus Framework", in Henty, Margaret (compiler) (1992). *Australian Conspectus Manual: a collection assessment guide*. Canberra: Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services. pp.8-12.
27. *ibid.* Appendix F: Guidelines for the preparation of a Collection Development Policy. pp.77-81.
28. During a telephone conversation with Rachel Jakimow, Conspectus Officer, National Library of Australia, in April 1996, she indicated that the Joint Policy using Conspectus has not been undertaken in this way by other groups of libraries in Australia.
29. Policy Statement on Libraries, Sydney College of Divinity Handbook. Carlingford: Sydney College of Divinity 1997. p.29.
30. Such as SCD. Macquarie University Library Reciprocal Borrowing Arrangements.
31. Standards for Theological Libraries, prepared by the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association, adopted by ANZTLA 1988. The author is currently working as part of a Subcommittee to revise these standards to incorporate the use of electronic media in theological libraries.
32. SCD Joint Collection Policy, App. 3
33. *ibid.* App. 4.
34. *ibid.* App. 5.

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