

Report of the 29th General Assembly of BETH and the ABTAPL Annual Conference 2000

Our President, Kim Robinson, attended these conferences in York, UK. We reprint this report, followed by a paper presented by the BETH President, Andre Geuns.

This year ABTAPL hosted the 29th General Assembly of Bibliothèques Europeennes de Theologie (BETH) held in York from 30th August to 2nd September. This was followed by ABTAPL's own Annual Conference from 2nd to 4th September, with the theme "Theological Libraries in the International Context". Some 40 delegates attended part or all of the joint conference at the College of Ripon and York St John. Our overseas colleagues were from libraries in Europe, Scandinavia, USA, Australia, and Africa (Democratic Republic of the Congo). Some attended as BETH delegates, some represented their national theological library associations (ATLA and ANZTLA), some were there as observers; some are also overseas members of ABTAPL.

On the evening of 30th August, we were welcomed to York by Canon Edward Norman of York Minster. The same evening Andre Geuns, President of BETH welcomed delegates to the Assembly. BETH has 20 members, representing some 1500 libraries. It was the first meeting, with the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association (ANZTLA) represented by their President, Kim Robinson; he is also a member of the executive of the Forum of Asian Theological Libraries. The Executive Director of the American Theological Library Association (ATLA), Dennis Norlin, had attended several Assemblies of BETH and this time he was joined by another member of the Board of ATLA, Melody Mazuk, as an observer; this year's ATLA conference had proposed setting up a committee on international librarianship, which would have links with BETH and RLIT, the Latin American theological libraries association. Father Suarez Alba said that the Spanish theological libraries association (ABIE), which he represented, wanted to foster links with libraries in South America.

The remainder of the BETH meetings were held over the following 2 1/2 days. Andre Geuns announced that he would be stepping down as President of BETH in 2001. The member associations of BETH presented their annual reports. Barbara Wolf-Dahm presented a report on the MACS (Multilingual Access to Subjects) project, which involves the British, French, German and Swiss national libraries. Penelope Hall reported that there had been little progress with the Etherli project. Funding was being sought and a working group was set up. It was agreed that co-operation with the MACS project should continue and develop.

Kadoc (Catholic Documentation and Research Centre), Belgium, the Johannes Lasco Bibliothek, Emden, Germany and Lausanne University Library, Switzerland were accepted as Extraordinary Members of BETH. The Deutsche Bibliothek Frankfurt, Germany had become an Extraordinary Member with effect from 1st January 2000. The BETH Assembly for 2001 would be held in Erfurt, Germany from 5th to 10th September, for 2002 in Salamanca, Spain, from 21st to 26th September (dates to be confirmed) and for 2003 in Italy. The minutes of the Assembly and related reports would be posted on the BETH website.

There were presentations by Eileen Crawford from Vanderbilt University on the Technical Services Website for Theology and Religion; by Thomas Riplinger on Tübingen University information and documentation services and by Dennis Norlin on the ATLA website and ATLA products which are available, including the new Serials Project (ATLAS). The latter presentation took place in the York public library where we were able to use their Room 18,

a suite of 18 computers which are available free of charge for public use, offering a wide range of software, including access to the internet. This also gave delegates an opportunity to look at the BETH website and to recommend others to colleagues.

Many of the ABTAPL delegates arrived on Saturday 2nd September; that evening a Conference Dinner took place with Rev. Graham Cornish as guest speaker. Graham is President of the Library Association for the year 2000 and for several years he has been a member of the Committee of ABTAPL. ABTAPL's Autumn General Meeting was held on 3rd September. Andrew Lacey reported that just over one-third of the copies of the *Guide to Theological and Religious Studies Collections of Great Britain and Ireland* had been sold. Publicity information and copies of a review had been sent to various publications and other suggestions for promoting the *Guide* would be welcome. The next edition of the *Union List of Periodicals* was due for publication early in 2002. John Howard had written an article about ABTAPL for a Librarians' Christian Fellowship publication; Judith Powles suggested that it could be adapted for inclusion in the Library Association *Record* and Margaret Ecclestone suggested that the LA *Branchlines* might be interested in publishing an article about this Conference. The Spring 2001 Conference would be held in Exeter.

This meeting was preceded by a panel session based on the theme of the ABTAPL conference "Theological Libraries in the International Context", chaired by Michael Walsh, Librarian at Heythrop College. Some of the papers presented appear in this *Bulletin* and it is hoped that others will be published in a later issue. Dennis Norlin spoke about ATLA, outlining its membership (850); an international relations committee was to be set up. Rev. Goma Ndamba, Librarian of the Protestant University in the Congo (DRC), had attended the ABTAPL conference in Edinburgh in 1983. The main stock of the Library at the University is theology, but also includes economics, law and science; in 1993 the Library and its stock were destroyed in looting. As one of the delegates said, listening to him speaking put our "problems" into perspective. Kim Robinson then talked about ANZTLA, its activities and plans for the future, including the preparation of a website; their next annual meeting will be in Auckland, New Zealand in July 2001. Sue Parkes, Director of SPCK Worldwide, described its work and Pierre Beffa, Librarian at the World Council of Churches, spoke about his library which operates in the context of a worldwide organisation. Andrd Genus closed the session with his thoughts on how religious libraries cope with diversity in Europe.

Several visits to libraries in or near York had been arranged and the reports follow. Our thanks are due to colleagues at the British Library Boston Spa who organised the conference and visits on our behalf.

Websites referred to above:

ATLA <http://www.atia.com>

BETH <http://www.theo.kuleuven.ac.be/beth>

MACS Project <http://infolab.kub.nl/pd/macs>

Technical services website for Theology and Religion <http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu=A/TS/techriical.htm>

University of Tübingen <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de>

Marion Smith

Birmingham Central Library

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Other items in this issue of ABTAPL Bulletin which may be of interest:

- Accounts of library visits as mentioned in last paragraph of report above : Ampleforth Abbey, York Minster Library, The Bar Convent, and British Library Boston Spa. Pp 8-11
- "Information and documentation in theology and religious studies in Tübingen" by Thomas Riplinger, University of Tübingen, Germany. Pp 25-27
- "Technical services website for theology and religion" by Eileen Crawford, Vanderbilt University. Pp 28-29