

Maximize access to your library in the 21st century

Nina Waters

Background

The Trinity College Library serves the needs of a fascinating cross-section of clientele. The greatest challenge for me is to provide the best all-round educational experience for a highly diverse group of pre-tertiary, undergraduate, postgraduate students and staff. This is an expanded brief that now includes nearly 1,000 students in total, across the three strands of the college.

An essential part of this diverse group is our Trinity College Theological School which is my focus for this paper. The Theological School is paving the way in the field of "accompanied online learning" with its new courses available on the Internet. We have students accessing this course from all over the world and the need to evaluate and maximize access to our library's resources was vital. I took the best part of my first academic year at Trinity to evaluate and plan a course of action, going back to basics, so that the needs of staff and students would best addressed.

1. Look at your collection, the physical structure and layout - does it work?

The **collection** of the Trinity College Library comprises both the Leeper Library and the Mollison Library. The Leeper Library has its own theological collection with its own particular emphases and strengths. It seeks to have a good coverage of the set texts of the United Faculty of Theology as well as standard theological works, scholarly exegeses etc. The Mollison Library which was originally housed in the Cathedral buildings of St. Paul's, holds a wide-ranging collection of resources on Anglican theology, devotion, liturgy, history and biography. Clergy and approved lay people of the Diocese of Melbourne are able to use this collection, and also the theological component of the Leeper Library.

The Library is four years old so we would certainly not have an increase in space provided in the near future. This meant that an efficient use of every space and every metre of shelving and storage, for all the varieties of resources, was urgently **evaluated and assessed**.

- The **physical structure** of the library housed the major part of the Mollison collection across one end, and was very difficult to access. The spine labels, written on in red pen, had faded and it was difficult to locate an item on the shelf. A further substantial part of the Mollison was held in the library compactus, and consisted of material that was a varied collection of archival resources, including an extensive collection of parish histories, much of which remains uncatalogued. While the Leeper 200's were in close proximity of this collection, this still resulted in the remaining part of the library having a somewhat circuitous layout.
- A new **layout** was possible if everything in the Library was moved, and then integrated in a more efficient and logical format. A daunting end-of-year task! After many discussions about the proposed integration of the two collections which included Bishop Grant, the Executive Officer of the Mollison Library, and the Warden of the College, Professor Markwell, approval was given. An intense summer of hard labour followed. We forged

ahead, knowing that access to all resources would be easier in the long run.

2. Evaluate your procedures

- Make an assessment of the entire collection. What is housed where and why? Decisions were made about bringing out some of the resources that were housed in an Annexe collection in the compactus. Why were they there? Perhaps these resources were more useful on the open shelves. The Mollison resources still have their own special bookplate and a distinguishing spine label. No-one can believe that we now have such a large collection. The material was always there! Sometimes a fresh pair of eyes can see a more practical layout so that resources, including their layout and structure, are more accessible. Regularly evaluating what you do, and why you do it, does take time, but it can be a way of maximizing your efficiency of provision of service.

3. How to improve access to resources - get rid of that card catalogue, if you possibly can!

- A major focus on retrospective cataloguing resulted in one block of cataloguing drawers being removed. A purpose-built bench has been installed with five new iMacs connected to the network. Another block of cataloguing drawers with the remaining Mollison card collection that still needs to be catalogued, will remain. Many Mollison users still feel more confident using the card catalogue, and we try to help them access the resources that have been put onto the Dynix system.

The collections now live together in a harmonious Dewey sequence, enhancing, complementing and supporting each other, in a way that makes each **more accessible**.

- To improve access, I have decided to purchase the **web based library system** by epixtech called *Horizon*. This system will enable all the resources of the library to be brought together through a single interface, and includes access to all the resources of the Internet. Our online theology students were a bargaining factor!
- An **ASP (Application Service Provider)** solution with epixtech means that the hardware and system administration is managed by ASP support staff remotely. That is, *epixtech* monitors the system, maintains and backs up the databases, installs bug fixes, undertakes software and operating system upgrades and re-indexing. An annual service fee maintains the support. To have the system administration off site is a bonus, particularly in libraries with one or two staff.

4. How to improve electronic access to resources - will it be used?

- The library was using the Dynix 180 library system serviced now by epixtech. The previous year before I started the server had a major crash and data was lost. Consequently the server was very fragile and due for replacement. This enabled me to capitalise on the fact that our library system needed careful assessment before any more money was spent on it.
- Our **online theology students** need easier access than our telnet link provided. Our number of licences were increased but there was still an ongoing problem if the catalogue was being accessed remotely and users were not logging off properly. The Theology School wanted to maximize our provision of services and to try to expand their online delivery of courses.

- Access to **indexes for journal references and citations** have been possible with the contacts made from the last ANZTLA conference. I have been able to join a consortia for the Proquest Religion database. A new consortia has been acknowledged for libraries associated with the MCD which enables unlimited access to the ATLA database. Our library would not have been able to access either of these without the help of this co-operative venture. Our *Horizon* system will be able to **track use of these resources and databases** which will enable us to make an informed decision at the end of the year, about whether to continue with these resources or not.
- 5. Use the Internet to create links and promote your collection.**
- The next stage was to develop resources for the **theology section** of the **Library web page**. A direct link was made to the Trinity College Theology School which has password access for its online courses. Help links for searching and evaluation of web sites, online tutorial help, and a block of useful theology sites forms the basis of support for this page. An electronic query has been set up for help with any reference queries. We will be purchasing a digital sender with a view to sending resources electronically to students rather than having to fax photocopied articles. Our adult theology users like to be able to email us for assistance.
- 6. Maintain the academic reference service.**
- We have many complex **reference queries** with respect to **archival material** on a weekly basis. The responsibility and the challenge of cataloguing and storing the vast Anglican repository of material that we hold is important. Trinity is undergoing a Master Planning exercise at the moment. It is vital that we are proactive when any such opportunities present to emphasize the importance of our historical collections.
 - Storage of important archival material and access to other special collections must be addressed in future planning. Our responsibility with respect to historical records of our institutions substantiates the importance of this. In the Leeper Library we are looking towards providing **digital versions** of resources on the web page so that resources are not needed to be handled and possibly damaged. Consideration is also being given to storing archival records in digital format which addresses the spatial problems and limitations that all libraries and colleges have.
- 7. Am I contributing to and making the most of my survival network?**
- Just as electronic networks and sharing of resources maximize our productivity for the future, so do creating supportive people networks. The **ANZTLA web page and Forum** are the best vehicle for our theology libraries to work co-operatively and ensure our respective survival.

Sometimes the most effective method of improving one's productivity is to first do something very simple. Go right back to the basics so that you maximize access to all the resources you have in your library. Then create some electronic links your colleagues and the to the wider world, and you are connected in the 21st century!

Nina Waters
Leeper Librarian, Trinity College.