
Saint Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College

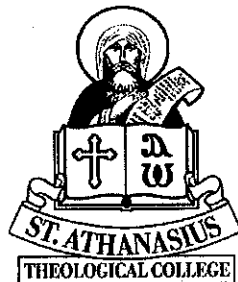
Donvale, Victoria

Gehan Aboud, Librarian

Mission Statement

The mission of Saint Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College is to provide deep appreciation and understanding of Orthodox Christianity and Coptic heritage. This is achieved through scholarship, research and the pursuit of academic excellence following the tradition of the Catechetical School of Alexandria.

The College aims to foster the spiritual growth and to develop the gifts of each individual through the pursuit of prayer, knowledge, communication, service and fellowship with each other, through the Grace of God.



College Logo

Saint Athanasius the Apostolic is featured in the emblem because he is well known as being the defender of Orthodoxy against the Arian heresy. He was

the 20th Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and he was instrumental in the formation of the Orthodox Creed while still a deacon at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD.

A part of the Creed is quoted on the scroll that he carries in the emblem. It states that Christ is "Begotten not made; of One Essence with the Father", confirming Christ's Divinity.

The book represents the Holy Scriptures as the source of Christian teaching, Christ being the central theme. The cross is the sign of Christ's salvation for humanity. He is the First and Last, Beginning and End, represented by the Alpha and Omega featured.

Saint Athanasius is a model of strong Orthodox faith and deep understanding of Scripture and this is the aim of the Theological College for its students.

History of the College

Saint Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College was officially opened on Sunday 18th February 2001 under the auspices of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Diocese of Melbourne. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark issued Papal Decree number 21/29 for the establishment of the College, the first of its kind in Melbourne.

The Coptic Orthodox Church has a rich tradition of education. This tradition dates as far back as the first century of Christianity at the time of Saint Mark the Apostle who founded the Church of Alexandria in 55 AD and was martyred in the streets of Alexandria in the year 68 AD. It was Saint Mark who established the Catechetical School of Alexandria. This school became the oldest centre for sacred sciences in the history of Christianity. In it the first system of christian theology was formed and the allegorical method of biblical exegesis was devised. The school presented a whole series of academic studies, and then continued to moral and religious philosophy, and finally to christian theology.

Subjects Offered

In 2003, the College is offering studies in christian family, dogmatic theology, pastoral theology, Coptic II, moral theology, Coptic art and iconography, christian education and New Testament I. Subjects are offered over two evenings a week, with lectures held from 7-9 pm.

The College Library

History

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III officially opened the library on Sunday 3rd December 1989. At this time the library was located at St Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church in Melbourne. In late 2000, the

Library was donated to the Saint Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College and in February 2001 it was moved from St Mary's Church to Coburg. In early 2002, the library was relocated to its final home at the new Diocese headquarters in Donvale, Melbourne, Victoria.

Collection

The Library contains approximately 3,500 titles in the subject areas of Old and New Testament, Greek and Coptic language studies, patristics, church history, iconography, Coptology, Egyptology and many other subject areas. A number of titles are not held elsewhere in Australian libraries.



Bibliotech

The Library's collection is recorded on the Bibliotech Integrated Library Management System (ILMS). Bibliotech is a fully featured Windows

based Library Management System custom designed in Australia.

Staff

Volunteers, who are supervised by a librarian, staff the College library. In 2001 and 2002, this was difficult as the College was offering studies over four evenings. In 2003, subjects will be offered over two evenings thus making the staffing situation easier.

Currently, two librarians will staff the Library. Both librarians are members of the College Council. Through the College Council, staff have had input to course development, College regulations and the development of policies and procedures. Involvement in the Council has been invaluable in assisting the library to support the objectives and mission of the College.

Support Network

The success of the library could not have been possible without the vision, encouragement and support of His Grace Bishop Suriel, Bishop of Melbourne and

Affiliated Regions and Dean of the College. Bishop Suriel was instrumental in the purchase of the Library's ILMS system, in ensuring the Library collection's continued expansion and in recognising the importance of a first class Library to support the College.



Pope Shenouda III and Bishop Suriel in the Library

When the College was established in February 2001, library staff became members of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association, Victorian Chapter. Members of ANZTLA have been very welcoming and generous in the time they have given. Attendance at ANZTLA meetings has been beneficial in creating networks that have resulted in among other benefits, offers of donations in subject areas in which the College is particularly strong.

Rewards & Challenges

A close working liaison and dialogue with College teaching staff and students in an on-going basis is among the most rewarding aspects of working in the College library. The environment at the College is truly one of co-operation and mutual respect.

When asked to write this article, one of the topics suggested for discussion was titled 'Strategies and tips for overcoming isolation, based on your experience'. I have given this a considerable amount of thought and have concluded that in a support network that is so very rich, both internal and external to the College, that the concept of 'isolation' really has not been applicable.

Challenges facing the library adequate staffing; ensuring staff and students of the College have access to relevant resources and are provided with an excellent service.contd. over page ...

Many Libraries make interesting work

Siobhan Foster

I have the best job in Australia! One person, six theological libraries, six days a week - pretty well perfect for someone besotted with books, theology and cataloguing. My business, Theological Library Services, has found a niche in the market providing professional library service to several religious orders who no longer require full time library staff.

The libraries range in size from approximately 6,000-26,000 volumes. They are owned by the Catholic, male, religious orders who were the founding members of Yarra Theological Union, in Box Hill, Victoria. Each of the libraries now uses the same computer programme (InMagic / DBText). Most use Dewey Decimal Classification, or a variation of it, though the largest library uses the Lynn-Murphy classification. Each of them serves the members of the orders (seminarians, lecturers, working and retired priests and brothers) and occasional visitors to the libraries.

Every day of the week is special for me - with a different location, community, charism of the religious order, and nature of the collection. Some of the libraries have significant specialist collections: missiology, social justice, sociology, spirituality, liturgy. Most of the libraries are well established, one is in its infancy. Monographs and journals form the bulk of the collections.

I can only think of one drawback to my work and that is having to open a week's post each day! I try to be systematic: get the journals checked in, displayed/shelved; accounts paid; group the book

orders together to contact suppliers and then work on my cataloguing. I scan journals for relevant articles or book reviews and enjoy linking clients and information. Email is a godsend to me, as are reliable book suppliers and my portable 'office' - a large briefcase with every tool of trade I need.

Working in many libraries generates its own library co-operation and my clients benefit from personal inter-library loans and transfer of information. I also feel supported by library networking through ANZTLA and LIAM [Libraries of Institutions Associated with the Melbourne College of Divinity] and a close working relationship with the staff at the main library, St Paschal Library, at Yarra Theological Union.

Studying theology is a great asset to my work, as well as being spiritually satisfying. I consider myself very fortunate working in 'my' libraries, providing a professional library service to the residential communities of different religious orders associated with Yarra Theological Union.



*The St John of the Cross Priory Library,
Discalced Carmelites, Box Hill, Vic.*

*contd. from previous page...*The College is very young. These and other challenges are by no means insurmountable and we look forward to creating a first class library.

Through God's grace, we believe many great things will be achieved through the establishment of the Saint Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College.

Mrs. Gehan Aboud, Librarian