
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