
The Salvation Army Booth College of Mission Library

Beverley McKenzie, Librarian



The library at The Salvation Army Booth College of Mission is the only Salvation Army library in New Zealand. Its purpose is to supply information and resources to Salvation Army cadets in their training as Salvation Army officers, and also to help students in their studies towards a Diploma of Biblical Studies. Booth College of Mission also runs courses for Leadership Development and the library holds material to support and encourage learning for those seeking to further their leadership skills.

As a sole librarian, my work is very varied. I enjoy working with all the students who use the library, helping them to find the resources suitable for their assignments, and sharing in their joy as they complete their course and graduate.

One of the things I find hard is to do all the library work in the time allotted. I seem to be able to keep each day rolling, but to find time to do the bigger projects like researching topics, sorting through donated books, following up back-orders, even time to write this article, is really difficult. I am sure that others do not understand the amount of 'unseen' work that goes on behind the scenes, or the amount of interruptions that happen each day.

I remember a couple of years back when I felt lonely and isolated in the library. Nobody really seemed to understand what I did. They were polite in their comments, but there was no one with whom I could 'brain-storm' to see things from a librarian's point of view. At that stage I was not on the Internet, so had no web or email connections. My lifesaver was an ANZTLA conference where I was able to talk with librarians for four whole days, to ask questions and get real answers, to

interact with people who understood and who gave me great ideas. It was wonderful listening to the lectures, and seeing other libraries and how things were done there. I went home buzzing with new ideas and solutions.

Three years ago I was given email access. This was like giving me a friend! I was now able to email my New Zealand ANZTLA colleagues and they were always obliging in helping me with resources. Their friendship over the email was and is very encouraging.

In 2000 I was given Internet access and was able to get on the web. I could access other library catalogues, the ANZTLA web page, the Amazon and other great book shop sites. A year ago I was given access to the National Library web site and that has been a great help with cataloguing and book searching. My wonder and great sense of being a part of the wider world of libraries is now immense. My feeling of isolation has gone.

One day I had a phone call from a person who wanted to do a Masters in Library and Information Science but who had never worked in a library before. She wanted to know if she could come and work in my library as a volunteer. (Have you ever had a phone call that made you burst into tears?) This lady came and worked for me for two years, doing all the periodicals, returns and all those involved tasks that I could never could get around to. She was wonderful.

We set up a library committee and co-opted others onto it. We brain stormed together and came up with some creative ideas. When she left, having gained her Masters and taking on a full-time job, she recommended another person to me, and I had another volunteer. Now it is great to be able to leave the smaller jobs to the
... ..contd. over page

volunteer and get on with the more involved tasks.

This year the library office is being re-located from a dark corner at the back of the library to a big open glass-fronted reception area at the front of the library. We have been able to upgrade the library computer system and hope that before the end of the year our catalogue will also be available on the web. I have had library posters printed and placed in the accommodation units to make everyone using Booth College of Mission aware of the library and its resources.

I am grateful to my colleagues at the Booth College of Mission for their understanding, support and encouragement. The academic staff, in particular, have been wonderful.

To all other sole librarians I would say:

- Realise that you are an OPAL (One Person Academic Librarian).

- Know that you are a very important person.
- Find other librarians to relate to, either in person, or on the Internet.
- Link in with ANZTLA as they are a great group of librarians.
- Get a volunteer to work with you to help share your load and your dreams.
- Form a library committee to support you and keep you accountable.
- Have a good relationship with the academic staff.
- And be pro-active and creative.

Beverley McKenzie



Portrait of an OPAL?

