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# Bishop Patteson Theological College

## Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands

*The following report on Bishop Patteson Theological College was the only response from the colleges in the Pacific Islands. Although the library is not yet a member of ANZTLA, they do subscribe to the ANZTLA Forum. We thank Lorna Reevely, a Canadian librarian doing some voluntary service as a Library Advisor, for this report. Lorna has now returned to her home in Canada.*

Bishop Patteson Theological College trains mostly men for ordained ministry in the church of Melanesia, a few women for lay ministry and also a few men for ordination by the United Church of Solomon Islands. The College is located an hour and a half west of Honiara on Guadalcanal, where there was serious fighting during the period of ethnic conflict from 1999-2001.



Students come for the four-year course with their families and the wives have a parallel program of preparation. Many of the students are unfamiliar with researching information for essays and generally they are not experienced in using a library.

The library collection is weak in materials matched to the curriculum content and so we do a lot of assisting students in finding what they need and can understand. It is always wonderful to see students and faculty excited about something they have found in the library. Many of the students already have experience in church work

and so understand what they will need for their future ministry.

Interlibrary loans from the Solomon Islands National Library and other Honiara institutions have helped fill in gaps on local topics enabling students to study their local cultures and church history.

One of the most difficult aspects of our work at the moment is that power is only provided by a generator. As we do not circulate books it is always a problem for students when we have to turn off the lights just before the generator cuts out. Many students live in crowded houses with constant disruptions, making study difficult.

Recently the situation in the Solomon Islands has been greatly upset so that we work in a context of confusion. There is some consideration at the moment to re-siting the College, but this means that it is hard to know what is reasonable to ask for in the way of repairs much less plan for the new library building which was supposed to be built in 1999. Funding and other forms of support from the College administration is difficult—but this is the usual lament of librarians everywhere.

Boniface Supa, the Librarian, worked at the National Library before coming to the College and has been able to form a strong network of contacts at the three major libraries in the country. Most of the dialogue is informal as there is no library association established yet. The Library Advisor hopes to maintain contact and offer some support from Canada.

The Librarian reports at all the College meetings and is an active member of the College community. He has taken one course per term with students and generally keeps the library on the College agenda. We have used Board meetings and other church events to talk about our programme and our needs. As a volunteer from overseas, the Library Advisor

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often has a chance to tell her story featuring the library.

The Internet, and particularly email, has allowed the Library Advisor to gain some regional connections and keep informed. We are only able to use the Internet in Honiara at an internet café established by the UNDP. ANZTLA has been extremely helpful.

Jeanette Little, the former SPATS (South Pacific Association of Theological Schools) Librarian, knows the College well and has been supportive with practical

suggestions. We have also established some support from donors who have responded to lists of books, which we researched online for availability before sending our requests.

Being in a country with few libraries and librarians means there is not much chance to 'talk shop'. Therefore we try to get people around us interested in what we are doing to help us with our problems. So far the response has been encouraging.

*Lorna Reevely*