
THE EXPERIENCE OF A NOVICE OF THE 2003 ANZTLA CONFERENCE

Pek Kheng Goh

Not only was I attending the conference for the first time, I was also new to the organization. I had just joined ANZTLA in April this year and I had neither been able to attend any of the Western Australia chapter meetings nor to make any contact with any of the WA members. I did not know what to expect and hence I was anxious about attending the ANZTLA Conference.

The article by Pek Kheng Goh, theological librarian at Murdoch University is the second contribution from participants who were attending their first ANZTLA Conference this year.

Maybe Pek's reflections and those of Kerrie Stevens (see August issue no. 50) will encourage others who may never have attended an ANZTLA conference to come to Brisbane in July 2004.

A few questions were in my mind when I went to the conference:

- Who are these theological librarians?
- What are they like?
- Do they come with halos above their heads? I for one do not have one over mine. So, maybe there may be some who do not have one too!!

It did not take long before I found them to be the most nurturing and warm hearted people around.

This was a conference which I enjoyed thoroughly and which I came away from with challenging thoughts to mull over, an awareness of things which I had failed to realise before, and interesting ideas to share with my colleagues.

Sister Veronica Brady's keynote address made me take note of the fact that as librarians we are not only to provide information to the library users but also to empower them to pursue and to want knowledge and wisdom. She certainly challenged us to think deeper of our role as theological librarians: more than merely providing information to our users. I believe that she has challenged us to think of what our role as theological librarians actually is and what values we hold in this day and age.

Our visit to the New Norcia Library was very interesting and enlightening. I had a great time and I am sure the others had as much enjoyment as I did. I felt very privileged to be given the opportunity to view the main collection in the monastery, where, as we all know, women are not permitted to go. It was also very interesting to hear Mike Tunney talk on Refectory Reading. Father Placid Spearritt in the plenary session indeed made me realise that as a librarian I

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am inevitably a censor. According to him, we are all censors whether we want to know it or not. What a revelation!

Grant Stone in his usual likeable way had us all laughing at what he had to share with us. According to him a budget is mere fiction. I am not so sure if I can agree with him but it is liberating to know that we can choose to believe that it is so. The tips he shared with us on how to stretch the dollar further are worth keeping in mind.

Our visit to Notre Dame had me admiring the old buildings of the campus. It was good to learn from Steve McVey about information literacy and that we need to teach generic skills which can be applied universally by library users. By the same token, Paul Genoni made a very important point that we as librarians are inclined to want to teach our users to do the kind of searching that an expert is trained to do when we should leave that to ourselves.

This was also a conference where words like ARI and AULOTS began to gel. I had minimal knowledge of what they were and how useful they were until Tony McCumstie in his reassuring way told all

less-experienced theological librarians present what they really were. He also raised the idea of mentoring and I wholeheartedly agree with him.

This was also a time where I began to network and make friends with very supportive and nurturing colleagues from all over Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. I can only say 'What a worthwhile time' I had at the conference and I have come away with fresh ideas and thoughts to share with my colleagues at Murdoch.

I look forward to meeting with the theological librarians in future conferences. I also hope that ANZTLA, with such a pool of very supportive and experienced librarians, will take up the mentoring system, as I can see the usefulness and the need for those new people like me. I took a final look at the theme of the conference, ie Nurturing Theological Education, and I thought to myself how apt the theme was. Thank you all and the organising committee who made all this possible.

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.....one for the books

How often have cataloguers read an author's preface in order to gain an understanding of their message? Catherine Halsall (Presbyterian Theological Centre, Burwood, NSW) has noted a recent publication (John E. Colwell, *Living the Christian Story: the distinctiveness of christian ethics*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001) in which the author muses in his preface just where his book will be placed in a library:

It's just possible that a librarian in a hurry may note the reference of its title to the Christian story and file it under the heading of Christology. Of course one would expect it to be placed within the 'ethics' section of a library but there may be some justification for it being filed under 'salvation', or 'Christian discipleship', or 'sanctification', or perhaps 'Pneumatology'.....

What about 230? Any other offers??