

**Site insight:
Lawrence and Pamela McIntosh
visit Pacific theological colleges May 1998**

Lawrence McIntosh

Our journey to Western Samoa and the Kingdom of Tonga was sponsored by the Commission on Education for Ministry of the Uniting Church in Australia. The intention of this honorary consultancy was to visit three colleges – Piula Theological College (Methodist) and Malua Theological College (Congregational) in Western Samoa, and Sia'atoutai Theological College (Methodist) in Tonga. Each college has a rich heritage of ministry-oriented studies; in two cases dating some one hundred and fifty years. We also paid a delightful visit to the Catholic Theological College at Maomao in Western Samoa.

Arriving in Samoa on the 6th May, we spent a week in Piula and a second week at Malua. We were in Tonga from the 19th to the 26th May.

We understood our mission to be one of listening, observing, offering advice, and generally drawing attention to library principles and practices as they appeared appropriate to a particular college. In each venue we worked through a *Library survey* which we had designed as a means of data gathering and generally reviewed the library's facilities, staffing requirements, collections and services. Discussions were held with library staff about perceptions of library services and the use of resources. In the Samoan colleges it was possible to meet members of the faculties and to discuss the inadequacies of resources for teaching purposes. In Tonga, given that our visit coincided with a vacation period, it was not possible to do this. With each library having quite different needs, we spent time in supporting staff in whatever job priorities made most sense. Pamela, also a librarian, variously assisted by reviewing donated items, revising the classification, and tutoring in technical-services processing.

Upon our return home, we prepared separate reports for the principals which summarised our conversations and observations. I suspect that these reports are limited by the constraints of time spent at each college and, in all likelihood, by a failure to adequately interpret all positions and perspectives. It is clear however that the colleges, having decided upon expanded degree programs, need to develop staff participation, augment resources and increase services.

We appreciated the cordial welcome and generous cooperation of many colleagues and were grateful also for the delightful accommodation and hospitality. The spontaneous friendship was indeed precious. We trust that our visits and reporting have helped clarify certain library issues and that our recommendations, including the lengthy lists of suggested reference works, monographs and serials, will assist in the further development of these very special libraries.

In response to a number of questions asked at the conference in July, I should add the following thoughts on ways in which ANZTLA may assist these Pacific libraries.

- I have recommended to each library that it becomes a member of ANZTLA and, if this eventuates, we should remember 'the Pacific presence', particularly in the *Newsletter*.
- The *Australasian religion index* could well index the contents of scholarly Polynesian serials, in addition to the *Journal of the Polynesian society*.
- Certain ANZTLA libraries may be willing to host members of the staffs of these libraries, for brief periods, and provide them with experience of library management, services and resources.
- Now for a negative. With regard to these libraries and others like them, we should cease sending cast-off material that is outdated, inaccurate, dilapidated or otherwise unacceptable. Pamela and I discovered piles of material, donated by American and Australian libraries, which were cluttering up library space and amounting to a millstone around the librarian's neck. (The silliest pile was that donated by an American college which had somehow confused 'technology' with 'theology', and sent out their outdated college texts on engineering!)

What to do? Following conversations with a particular library, we could profitably send duplicates of *current* publications, in *relevant* subject areas. But please, *not junk*.

- and, finally, we should, periodically, seek the advice of Jeanette Little, ANZTLA's expert in the area, concerning ways in which we could be of use to Pacific libraries.

Our colleagues in these islands are among the most gracious and courteous people imaginable. Their hospitality is legendary. It is our privilege to be with them and learn from them.

Lawrence D. McIntosh



Directory of Australian Special Libraries

Do you wish to be included in the 10th edition of this directory (due to be published early 1999)? It may be too late! But if you're really keen, you might contact Barbara Eames, the Editor.

Barbara, a self-employed consultant who has worked in Special Libraries in Victoria for many years, was appointed Editor for the 10th edition of DASL (Directory of Australian Special Libraries) by the National Committee Special Libraries Section. She would appreciate hearing from you, and welcomes any information regarding Special Libraries that have moved, changed names, or may need to be removed from the Directory.

The DASL Editor can be contacted at Box 3091, Syndal Vic 3149.