



Conference Summary

by Ross McPhee

Summary of the Twenty-Ninth ANZTLA Conference, held at University College, Parkville, Victoria, from Wednesday 2nd to Saturday 5th July, 2014.

Sixty-seven delegates from Australia, New Zealand, Kiribati and Fiji dodged Melbourne's cold snap to attend the ANZTLA conference at University College. Our theme was *Past, Present, Potential*, and in keeping with that theme, delegates enjoyed a packed program.

It was a great privilege to have Brenda Bailey-Hainer as our keynote speaker to kick off proceedings. The higher education landscape is changing, technology is changing, and the religious landscape is changing. Our libraries will not be immune from these changes. Despite this uncertainty and turmoil, there are also significant opportunities. The future is exciting.

In recent years we have used part of the program to look at other religions, and this year was no exception. We enjoyed visiting an Albanian mosque in Carlton, and seeing part of the University of Melbourne's ancient texts collection, which is partly comprised of a set of antiquarian Qur'ans. Other curios on display included a copy of the order of service for former Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt's 1967 memorial service, and former US President Jimmy Carter's 1976 campaign biography, *Why Not the Best?*

Back to Islam ... without a doubt, missiologist Dr Bernie Power from Melbourne School of Theology is one of the most knowledgeable Christian scholars of Islam and its sacred writings that I've ever heard. We greatly appreciated him giving his time to share his knowledge with us.

Our New Zealand colleagues are making innovative use of freely available online resources to engage with their patrons and increase library traffic. As well as social media tools such as Facebook, one library is using QR codes to promote the use of electronic books. A printed QR code in a plastic holder is placed on the library shelf in the space of the print version where that is borrowed out. When scanned on the patron's smart phone or tablet, it links directly to the ebook version in the library catalogue.

Library consultant Kevin Hennah was very engaging, challenging, and inspiring. We need to think of our libraries as a product and market ourselves to our patrons. There are many cheap and inexpensive things to do to keep our libraries relevant. We live in an age driven by technology and the internet, so library design and layout must reflect this way of thinking and mode of service delivery. It must be exciting and inviting from the moment a patron comes in, lit effectively, with bold, dynamic, and clear signage. We can't just tweak around



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the edges by giving out-of-date ideas a modern veneer. If we are to increase circulation, we need to radically rethink our whole way of operating.

Mark Hantgartner gave a stimulating paper on theology students as a community of researchers, based on the findings of a focus group study he ran with a cohort of students. To summarise the students' information seeking behaviour: overall their research skills were sound, but they rated their abilities more highly than they actually showed. As far as libraries are concerned, we need to provide multipurpose spaces for individual study, unstructured and casual group study, structured and planned collaborations, and research activities.

Hugh McGinlay has long been associated with ANZTLA. He has just started a new publishing house called Morning Star Publishing. This will be based on a print-on-demand model, with limited print runs and limited author contracts. The future is bright for Christian publishers following this model.

John Capper, Dean of Teaching and Learning at the University of Divinity in Melbourne, capped off the conference with his paper on blended learning. This is a mixture of online and face-to-face, separate and combined cohorts, linearity and flexibility. It presents high options and high student expectations. It is instant, with no barriers, all online, accessible, relevant, and immediate, requiring high level technology. Anything that is not quick risks being perceived as irrelevant. Blended learning is maintaining multiple pathways. Readers are becoming less and less visible. How many students try to do the bulk of their study and research online, and only visit their campus if they feel it's necessary to do so?

On behalf of the conference organising committee Ros Devenish, Siobhan Foster, Ruth Millard, Kerrie Stevens, I wish to thank you all for your attendance which made for a successful conference, and look forward to seeing some or many of you for the 30th ANZTLA conference in Auckland in July 2015.