

AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANSHIP: A VIEW FROM 'DOWN UNDER'

Rev. Trevor Zweck, Luther Seminary

During the months of May, June and July 1986, the writer was privileged to undertake a two months study tour of United States libraries. The main focus was on theological libraries, but opportunity was taken to visit a number of university and public libraries as well. The impressions which are here reported, however, apply mainly to the theological libraries. Included are some observations of the American Theological Library Association, drawn mainly from attendance at the 40th Annual Conference of the Association in Kansas City, MO.

The following is a list of the thirty libraries and related institutions visited in thirteen locations, with visits lasting from a minimum of one hour to a maximum of four days:

Fuller Theological Library, Pasadena, CA
 Luther-Northwestern Theological Seminary Library, St. Paul, MN
 Concordia College Library, River Forest, IL
 Billy Graham Center Library, Evanston, IL
 Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick Library, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, IL
 Concordia Theological Seminary Library, Fort Wayne, IN
 Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, IN
 Trinity Lutheran Seminary Library, Columbus, OH
 Ohio State University Library, Columbus, OH
 Online Computer Library Center, Dublin, OH
 Concordia Seminary Library, St. Louis, MO
 Center for Reformation Research, St. Louis, MO
 Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO
 International Center, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, St. Louis, MO
 American Theological Library Association Annual Conference, Rockhurst
 College, Kansas City, MO
 Union Theological Seminary in Virginia Library, Richmond, VA
 Virginia State Library, Richmond, VA
 University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, NC
 Duke University & Divinity School Library, Durham, NC
 Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, NJ
 Lutheran Theological Seminary Library, Philadelphia, PA
 Library of Congress, Washington, DC
 Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, CT
 Sterling Library & Beinicke Rare Book Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT
 Andover-Harvard Divinity School Library, Cambridge, MA
 Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

THE LIBRARIES

While the main focus of attention was on theological libraries, opportunity was taken to visit more briefly a number of university and public libraries as well. The comments which follow, however, relate more specifically to the theological libraries, whether they be of university-related divinity schools or denominational seminaries.

All the libraries visited are impressive in their size and quality. Holdings range from about 100,000 to 400,000 volumes, and current subscriptions to periodicals range from about 400 to 1500. The buildings are impressive, both in regard to general architecture (whether modern or more traditional) and to interior design and layout. All seem to have some unique and special features, usually a special collection (e.g., rare books, media centre, archival collection, etc.) All appear to be well staffed, well organised, and well equipped. Computers have become an indispensable item of library equipment, pervading virtually all library routines and services, and microfiche is used extensively (e.g., for union catalogues, individual catalogues, and for preservation of out-of-print materials).

AUTOMATION

While some of the university and public libraries are fully automated, this is not true of any of the theological libraries visited as yet.

Nevertheless, all have automated at least some major aspect of their operations and all seem to see full automation as their ultimate goal - as finances permit. Concordia, St. Louis, expects to be fully online by the end of 1986.

To date, most of the benefits of automation have been to staff. The major advantages to users will come with the advent of the online catalogue, which the patrons of many university and public libraries already enjoy. The most obvious advantages to date have been in the area of technical processing, (especially copy cataloguing) and in the building of computer databases, but there have also been tremendous benefits in the location and processing of inter-library loans.

Networking

The whole American library scene is dominated by the major resource-sharing networks, OCLC and RLIN. The comparable Australian facility is the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN), which is now providing most of the services offered by the American utilities. Figures quoted show that ABN is considerably more economical to use than its American counter-parts. Some members of OCLC reported costs of between US\$10,000 and US\$15,000, and some are considering other alternatives for some of the services offered.

The Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) involves nearly 5,000 libraries, including nearly all of those visited. The Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) comprises a small group of very large academic libraries.

The key operation of the networks is shared *cataloguing*, original records being input as required by participants and then borrowed by other participants or customers. Holdings statements added by local libraries indicate the locations of items for *interlibrary loans*, for which requests can be generated online. While shared cataloguing and interlibrary loans are essential to the networks' operations, other services are also provided, such as modules for *acquisitions* and financial management and *serials control*. OCLC has in the past offered both of these services online, but will in future market separate in-house packages for these procedures.

Cataloguing Systems

OCLC is the most commonly used cataloguing utility. It is based on MARC records, is simple and efficient, and allows searching by author, title, series, ISN, and LCCN. It currently lacks subject and keyword searching, but this will be provided by the Oxford Project, which is producing new and enhanced software. Output is in the form of either cards, microfiche, magnetic tape, or direct downloading to a local system. OCLC is not readily available in Australia, but the ABN offers comparable services.

RLIN is similar in many respects to OCLC, but more sophisticated and more expensive. It includes a keyword searching capability.

BIB-BASE/CAT has been developed by Robert Kepple (a theological librarian). This is not a network system, but records are provided on tape from the UTLAS database, or, alternatively, from BIBLIOFILE. Several libraries are either already using it or considering its use, as a cheaper alternative to OCLC. It offers many attractions to local librarians, not the least being the ready availability of the programmer.

BIBLIOFILE is based on MARC records produced by the Library of Congress and made available on CD-Rom laser discs. It can be used in conjunction with the Bib-Base software or software supplied by the marketing firm, the Library Corporation. This is seen as another cheaper alternative to the major networks and was observed at St. Paul (with software developed in-house) and Gettysburg (with the BIB-BASE software). It is now being marketed also in Australia.

LOCAL SYSTEMS which have been developed largely, if not completely, in-house, or locally, were observed at a number of major libraries (University of Chicago, Harvard University, Virginia State Library, Ohio State University) and one theological library (Concordia, St. Louis). The latter is currently updating its software and planning the purchase of new hardware for a fully automated system (including OPAC).

Evaluation of Cataloguing Systems

It became very obvious that copy cataloguing by means of automated databases has very considerable advantages over original cataloguing by manual methods:

1. major financial savings;
2. major time savings;
3. improved standards of cataloguing;
4. versatility of manipulation of (MARC) records;
5. portability of records; and
6. building up a database for the OPAC.

Assessment of Systems Investigated

Network systems based on computer databases are practically indispensable on the American theological library scene. Since most of the essential services provided by the networks are available in Australia through the ABN, participation in this network should be seriously considered for all Australian theological libraries.

Participation in ABN would have several advantages over the use of BIBLIOFILE, the most realistic alternative:

1. it provides access and input to the National Bibliographic Database, including ABN support services and access to ALL locations;
2. it makes the local collection available to a wider circle of potential users;
3. it provides the basis (i.e., MARC records) for the OPAC;
4. it is now (following a revision of the pricing policy of ABN) cheaper to do copy cataloguing through ABN;
5. it is inexpensive by comparison with the American utilities.

Acquisitions Systems

Most of the libraries visited have an acquisitions sub-system of some kind. These provide not only automated processing of orders, but financial management as well. Depending on system interfaces and the existence of an OPAC, it is possible to enter an item into the catalogue (as also a union catalogue) from the moment it is ordered.

OCLC has a good but expensive system. It has been possible to despatch orders online via OCLC or to get hard copy from OCLC for direct mailing to suppliers. However, this option is being discontinued and replaced with an in-house system which will not involve the network, except for obtaining bibliographic information. Some of the libraries visited are considering cheaper alternatives to the former OCLC system. **RLIN** has a similar system, which is similarly expensive.

BIB/BASE/ACQ is being used by some libraries, either in conjunction with the **BIBLIOFILE** database or its own database. It includes the financial management module. **BIBLIOFILE** has a system based on the Any Book database of the Library Corporation. It lacks a financial management package.

Evaluation of Acquisitions Systems

Automated acquisitions systems offer a number of advantages over manual systems:

1. saving of time;
2. better financial management;
3. provision of a basic bibliographic record for future cataloguing;
4. elimination of duplication of orders;
5. facilitating possible co-ordination of ordering with other libraries.

Assessment of Systems Investigated

ABN does not yet have an acquisitions sub-system, but it should be worth considering when it does become available. **BIB-BASE/ACQ** might be worth considering, but would have to interface with other systems in use in the library. The new OCLC in-house system may also be worthy of further investigation. However, an acquisitions system is not as necessary to a small or medium library as a cataloguing system; the latter should be given top priority.

Serials Control

Several of the larger libraries visited have serials sub-systems. They record bibliographic information about the serial, record the receipt of each issue, generate claims for items not received, and provide financial management.

OCLC has had a network system (whereby OCLC would send the claims to the errant suppliers), but is discontinuing this system in favour of an in-house system (as with acquisitions). Some libraries reported some dissatisfaction with the system, due to:

1. conflicts in the bibliographic information supplied,
- and
2. the labour-intensive operation (which involves as much work as a manual system).

However, it does provide better financial control.

FAXON is a supplier of periodicals which operates its own serials control system. It is limited to journals supplied by Faxon, but is otherwise similar to OCLC.

Evaluation of Serials Systems

Automated serials systems are useful for providing reminders of when issues are due and generating claims when they become overdue. They also help with financial management. However, they do not appear to be significantly quicker than manual systems.

Circulation Systems

Only the very large libraries seem to have automated their circulation systems. The theological libraries consider that they can cope adequately with manual systems. Automation may become a feasible alternative when the online catalogue (OPAC) is established. Charging and discharging items with the aid of wands would be quicker than manual methods and would provide better control (e.g., through blocks on items or users) and statistical information.

Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)

The OPAC is the ultimate stage of library automation. Some of the larger university and public libraries have achieved this level, but as yet none of the theological libraries visited. However, Concordia, St. Louis is confident of being online by the end of 1986 with newly-revised software and new hardware.

It is at the OPAC stage that the major advantages of automation for the user becomes evident. The OPAC permits a revolutionary new approach to subject searching (information retrieval). Users are not bound to cumbersome, fixed-form, subdivided subject headings, but can search by keywords, not only in the subject headings area of the bibliographic record, but also the title and any additional notes which may be added by the cataloguer. Boolean logic can also be used to refine searches (i.e., the use of the terms "and", "or", and "not"). The process is also infinitely quicker than any manual method could possibly be.

All libraries visited appear to be heading in the direction of the OPAC, but are being inhibited by factors such as the cost of the hardware and the cost and time involved in retrospective conversion of existing records. The terms under which ABN allows retrocon appear very much more favourable than anything noted on the American scene.

Retrospective Conversion

With access to a suitable database (e.g., OCLC, RLIN, UTLAS, BIBLIOFILE), retrocon is comparatively simple, but where thousands of records are involved it is inevitably time-consuming and may be expensive, especially where updating of existing records is required. With ABN, the majority of the task *may* be as simple as adding a holdings statement to an existing record. Use of the BIBLIOFILE database would be a realistic alternative, but would probably not be any cheaper than ABN and would not place our holdings on the National Bibliographic Database. Self-evidently, the smaller the catalogue when retrocon is undertaken, the cheaper the process will be! This is one area where small libraries have one advantage over large ones!

Summary Statement on Automation

Computers are here to stay and will increasingly become an essential aspect of an adequate library service. Already, participation in wider networks is effectively limited to automated systems. We already have the situation in Australia that it is impossible to be involved in a national union catalogue without a computer. The sooner automation is implemented, the better it will be for our library users!

CO-OPERATION

Practically all of the libraries visited are involved in some degree of regional co-operation, the degree being limited chiefly by the independence and individuality of the various libraries involved. In the American situation, it is frequently possible to achieve a high degree of self-sufficiency within a narrowly defined area (e.g., the Chicago area, where the libraries of the Association of Chicago Theological Schools between them hold almost as many monographs and serial titles as all the Australian and New Zealand theological libraries put together).

Most co-operative arrangements seem to have begun with a union list of periodicals. Examples are the Minnesota Consortium of Theological Libraries, The Southeast Pennsylvania Theological Library Association, the Association of Chicago Theological Schools, and the Boston Theological Institute. Not many examples of union catalogues were encountered (the MCTL being a notable exception), since links with OCLC give adequate access to the holdings of other libraries. This suggests that the way to go for Australian theological libraries is via ABN.

Nearly all co-operative arrangements encountered involved reciprocal borrowing rights. There appear to be no examples of the centralisation of cataloguing or acquisitions. However, there has generally been some defining of areas of collection specialisation, checking of major purchases, and one or two examples of union lists of standing orders (e.g., for major series).

BUILDINGS

Apart from external architecture, the library buildings visited generally show evidence of careful planning in interior design and layout. However, it is also frequently evident that libraries have outgrown the most optimistic projections of their designers. In a number of cases, space-consuming architectural niceties have had to be adapted to more practical and realistic uses, not always to very good effect. Nevertheless, there has generally been considerable effort put into making the entrance to the library visually appealing, creating an impression of spaciousness and warmth, and considering the comfort of the user.

Most theological libraries have created some kind of pastoral resource and/or curriculum development centre, sometimes as part of a larger audio-visual centre. It is evident that the nature of the materials collected has created problems of cataloguing and housing, and there appears to be no commonly-accepted method of dealing with either of these problems.

A prominent feature of all the libraries visited is the separate reference room. Special attention is given to the convenience of library users in making use of the reference collection.

Likewise, special care and attention has been given to rare book collections. There is always a separate room, with attention being given to security, atmospheric control, dust control, minimal lighting, and facilities for study within the room. Some of the rare book rooms are very attractive.

Current periodicals are usually attractively displayed and some of the libraries with larger subscription lists have separated out a smaller group of the most popular items and have provided a more comfortable environment for reading them.

THE AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The dominant emphases on the ATLA scene at the present moment appear to be collection development and evaluation, applications of computer technology, and the preservation of deteriorating monographs. Meanwhile, the program of indexing of periodicals is being continued and expanded.

The emphasis on collection evaluation is based on the ARL Conspectus. The Association of Research Libraries has expanded the system previously adopted by the American Library Association, with its coding on a numerical scale from 0 to 5:

- 0 = Out of scope
- 1 = Minimal level
- 2 = Basic information level
- 3 = Instructional support level
- 4 = Research level
- 5 = Comprehensive collecting level

ARL has provided guidelines for interpreting the different levels, and has provided a further breakdown of levels two and three: introductory and advanced. The hope is that libraries across North America will use the system to create a national online inventory of library subject strengths.

The ATLA has committed itself to supporting the project by producing the North American Theological Inventory. It is developing guidelines and worksheets for the Philosophy and Religion section, based on Library of Congress subject groupings which are paralleled by the

relevant Dewey and Pettee classification numbers. Provision is made for noting the Existing Collection Strength (ECS), the Current Collecting Intensity (CCI), and for further comments (where a library producing a collection development policy can insert desired collection levels).

At the conference, the theme of collection development was further explored in a seminar on purchasing retrospective materials. The United States is fortunate in having a number of specialist secondhand dealers in theological books. Several representatives of these dealers shared thoughts on the topic with a group of librarians. Some of the ideas which came out of the session were: the need to develop a good understanding with book dealers, to develop want (desiderata) lists, and also negative want lists (e.g., "We want everything written by Paul Tillich available in English, but we already have ...").

There is a worldwide concern about the deterioration of books printed between 1850 and 1910, because of the acidic paper on which they were printed. The ATLA has developed a program for the preservation of such materials and is leading the world in this area of library activity. Building on its experience in microfilming the less popular religious and theological periodicals (including many church papers), its Preservation Board is aiming to microfilm 4000 titles a year from the target group and is marketing them on high quality microfiche (with full cataloguing data) for US\$12 to non-subscribers and US\$5.25 to subscribers (with a minimum subscription of 200 items). The project provides a good method of collection building for libraries interested in collecting material from that era. The Board is also interested in preserving Australian materials and has suggested "Australian aborigines" (ethnology, missions, etc.) as a possible initial subject area. For further information, contact Robert P. Markham, ATLA Preservation Board, 1118 E 55th Pl, Chicago, IL 60615.

Major issues involving the application of computer technology have been addressed in previous years and computers are by now well entrenched in American theological libraries. Current interests in automation are therefore mainly in the area of programmes and services involving microcomputers, e.g., for word processing, statistics, financial management, bibliographies, concordances, indexing and languages (including Greek and Hebrew). The majority of those involved in the Microcomputer User's Group (MUG) are using IBM PC's, apparently because of the variety of programs developed for these machines.

Some important developments are taking place with regard to ATLA Religion Indexes. Their offices are located in cramped quarters on the fourth floor of an old building in Chicago, but their surroundings are no hindrance to progress. The elimination of abstracts from *Religion Index One* means they will now be able to increase their coverage by 35-40 new titles to around 400 periodicals. The *Index to Book Reviews in Religion* has also been separated out from RIO from the beginning of 1986 and is published in loose-leaf format on a quarterly basis, with a cumulation at the end of the year. An additional feature is the inclusion of a subject index with the annual cumulation, which will be an aid to book selection. The Index Board is also seeking to enhance the RELI online database by including the *Catholic Periodical and Literature Index* and is also negotiating with the Southern Baptists and the United Methodists regarding their periodical indexes.

The annual conference provides the opportunity for denominational groups to meet and discuss matters of mutual interest. Some are highly organized and some are very casual. The writer attended the meeting of the Lutheran Librarians' Group. Besides meeting kindred spirits from the American scene, he heard them take up the problem of indexing Lutheran periodicals, with a view to including them also on the RELI database. A start has been made by producing a catalogue of Lutheran periodicals emanating from North America.

Another special interest group which met at the conference was the Pettee User's Group. It took up the revision and updating of the classification, which will get underway again following the return to good health of Dr. John Trotti of Union Theological Seminary in

Virginia, the co-ordinator and copyright holder. To improve the opportunity for feedback from Australian libraries, a single airmail copy of *Pettee Matters* will be sent to Australia for local duplication and distribution to Australian users. All known users of the Pettee Classification will be contacted. (The writer will be the Australian co-ordinator).

Some two hundred people usually attend the annual conference, and they are provided with a wide variety of workshops and papers to attend. There are also a number of plenary sessions. This conference included a special 40th anniversary celebration. It also featured an address by Michael Gorman (a compiler of *AACR2*) on "Bibliographic control in the Smaller, Specialized Library". He urged the librarians to conform to acceptable standards in the interest of sharing with one another. Every library has something distinctive to offer the total community and must be prepared to sacrifice its own individuality to make it available to others. This address should be essential reading for all theological librarians when it appears in the *ATLA Proceedings*. Another feature speaker was Bob Lynn, of the Lilly Foundation. He spoke of the need for faculty not to neglect research and for libraries to be equipped to support them in their scholarly endeavours.

The writer's own presentation on "Australian and New Zealand Theological Libraries and Librarianship" was well received and revealed a widespread interest in Australia - both the church scene in general and the theological education and library scene in particular.

To be present at a conference of the ATLA is to feel that one is at the very forefront of developments in theological librarianship. It is an experience which more Australians and New Zealanders ought to share. The 1987 conference will be held in San Francisco, which is about as close to our part of the world as it can be! For the less than A\$2000 it would cost, it would be a very profitable investment!