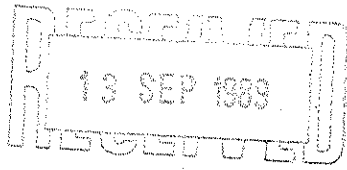


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THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY

ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 8

AUGUST 1989

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AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

ANZTLA is an association of libraries and individuals involved in and interested in theological librarianship. It seeks to cooperate with the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools and to promote its aims and objectives insofar as they apply to libraries and librarianship. However, membership is open to all libraries and individuals sharing the interests of the association, upon the payment of the prescribed fee.

The ANZTLA Newsletter is published three times a year to provide a means of communication between personnel involved in and interested in theological librarianship. Contributions are invited of articles and items of particular interest to theological librarianship: scholarly articles; information on all aspects of librarianship; book reviews; library profiles; and news about libraries and librarians.

ANZTLA holds an annual conference, where practicable in association with the annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools. Local chapters in the major cities provide a forum for local interaction.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Twenty three librarians assembled at St John's College, Auckland for the recent ANZTLA Conference which has been voted "the best yet"! We recognise the difficulties so many of our ANZTLA members face in managing to attend such occasions - not least the financial constraints. For this reason we have made this issue a "Conference Proceedings", because we feel that all readers should have the opportunity to benefit from the wisdom and expertise of the Conference speakers.

Both Harold Pidwell and Coral Ridling were very conversational and entertaining in their presentation. Their addresses have been published just as presented - we hope you find them as entertaining, as well as informatvie, as we did. You may like to purchase cassette tapes of the key sessions. See the advertisement and order form on page 28?.

Australasian Religion Index is no longer simply in embryo. In spite of a few hiccups, ARI is alive and well! Those smart members who subscribed pre-publication should already have received their copies. To secure your copy, why not subscribe today? Use the brochure inserted with this issue. Pass it on if you already have yours. Many thanks to the team of indexers, and especially to the 'inner circle' of the Editorial Committee in Melbourne who worked many long hours checking the datasheets ready for the keyboarders and others in Wagga Wagga.

By next issue, we hope to have a definitive word on the revised edition of AULOTS, which Hans Arns presently reports "is progressing well".

We popped in the final article on backlogs for a bit of fun reading.

FOURTH ANZTLA CONFERENCE HELD IN AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

"Ehara I Te mea
No Inaianei te aroha
No nga Tupuna
Tuku iho tuku iho"
("There is no better than the love
From the ancestors
Trickling down
Trickling down")

With the singing of these words of an ancient Maori greeting, staff from St. John's/Trinity welcomed nine Australians and fourteen New Zealanders to the fourth conference of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association, held on the magnificent campus of the College of St. John the Evangelist, Auckland, 2-4 July, 1989. It was the first time the conference had been held in The Land of the Long White Cloud and constituted the biggest gathering of New Zealand theological librarians in history. As a sequel to the conference, they held a meeting to form the New Zealand chapter of ANZTLA.

The major emphasis of the conference was on reference work. The Reverend Harold Pidwell, Baptist Theological College of New Zealand, introduced the theme with "Reference from a user's point of view"; based on a survey of Auckland theological library users, it showed how regular library practices often place obstacles in the way of users. Coral Ridling, Auckland Public Library, brought a lifetime of astute library experience to her session on "The Reference Interview"; it emphasized that we dare never forget that patrons are people. Margaret Tibbles, Satis, Auckland, took up the highly specialized topic of "Telephone Reference Services"; she emphasized the need to get the question clear before beginning the search for the answer. A John Cleese Video helped to reinforce the message. Finally, Dr. Lawrence McIntosh, Joint Theological Library, Parkville, Victoria, presented a paper on "Reference Tools and their Evaluation"; pointing out the difference between a correct answer and a quality answer to a question, he talked from experience about the tools which will help one to arrive at the latter.

A final plenary session was devoted largely to sharing information on automated library systems; it showed that while many libraries are considering or even planning to automate, only three have so far taken the plunge. Opportunity was provided for hands-on investigation of the CATALIST system, developed in New Zealand and now installed in both St. John's and Baptist theological libraries in Auckland.

A visit to the Sylvia Ashton-Warner Library, Auckland Teachers College, offered new insights into user education, the use of CD-Rom technology, the processing and storage of audio-visual materials, and the newly-installed Dynix automated library system.

Social highlights of the conference included a sumptuous dinner, providing, among other culinary delights, a taste of New Zealand wine, and a visit to Kelly Tarlton's Underwater World, courtesy of Hills Library Information Service.

In the Annual General Meeting of the association, it was decided:

- to include all library staff in institutional membership;
- to hold the next conference at Pius XII Regional Seminary, Banyo, Queensland, 5-7 July, 1990;
- to add a day to future conferences for taking in something of the local environment;
- to retain membership and subscription fees at A\$20 and A\$15 and to make it possible for New Zealand members to remit fees to a New Zealand representative;
- to create an ANZTLA logo and letterhead.

Following the decision of the funding Secretary/Treasurer, Hans Arns, to step down from this position, the conference elected as his replacement Mrs. Val Canty, Parkin-Wesley Theological College, 20 King William Road, Wayville, SA, 5034, Australia. Mrs. Liz Jordan, Trinity Theological College, Auchenflower, Queensland, was elected as the Extra Member of the Executive for 1989/90. All other officers were re-elected, including the board and committee of the *Australasian Religion Index*, the first issue of which was being printed as the conference was in session.

(Rev.) Trevor Zweck,
President, ANZTLA.

REFERENCE FROM A USER'S POINT OF VIEW

Harold Pidwell

I am delighted that this conference is being held in New Zealand as the NZ Association of Theological Colleges (a chapter of ANZATS) has tried for some years to get such a group together. Perhaps it says something about the relationship and priorities of teaching staff and Librarians that it has taken so long for it to come about. But more about that later.

It is an opportune time for us. Developments in theological education in New Zealand are happening very quickly now, and here in Auckland we (or at least I) feel we have a tiger by the tail and we are having to work very very hard to keep up. Three years ago our co-operation was a glimmer on the horizon and worked mainly through faculty relationships. Yet last Friday representatives of the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic and Methodist Churches sat down together in this building and approved 97 pages of course prescriptions for 1990. Just 10 days earlier we held the first meeting of the Auckland University Joint Board of Studies for the Bachelor of Theology degree which we begin teaching in 1990. Respect and co-operation are increasing almost daily, yet each institution is finding perhaps more freedom than ever before to express its own emphases and thus enrich us all. In this the relationship between theological libraries will become increasingly important. Hopefully out of models of good co-operation in Australia and Dunedin we will learn a great deal this week and receive a good impetus to take some further steps which will enhance the witness of the whole Church.

But to the task in hand.

I am a user of libraries. I have been as long as I can remember. When I was a child my father, who worked on Saturdays, sent me off each week to the Public Library in Wanganui to borrow four books for him. No fiction or war stories. Just biography, history, and travel, together with two magazines, usually Life and one other. The librarians got to know the Pidwell kids who came weekly to the adult section of the Library, and we came to know them as friendly helpful people. Sometimes they would say "I think your father's read this one" or "I've put this aside for your father

this week". So I was never fearful of the library atmosphere - at least in the adult section. Strangely enough I never found my way around the children's section quite as well. Did the staff not think I needed the same assistance as a child borrowing books for his insatiable father?

My next experience of a library was as a theological student. The library was not large - just a big room full of books. But it was a mystery to me. I can well remember the first time I went to find a book, borrow it and take it back to my room. I was near the end of my third year of studies! Nearly two MCD Diplomas complete and little library expertise. Mind you, the library was dark, the books stacked up nearly 12 feet high, few journals and little real expectation that theological students would do more than reproduce their lecture notes. The system did not encourage me to become a user. Those who used the library were the few "intellectuals" among us. We "real" ministerial students did not need it, either to preach or pass exams.

This state lasted through my BD studies also. However the theological ferment which erupted in the 60's changed all that for me and I knew I had to find some trajectories, some patterns of thinking, start some serious Biblical and theological study or I would not survive. Dunedin and the theological hall at Knox College started me off afresh. The stimulation of lecturers and students there, who became friends, gave fresh impetus to my own journey. But why did I not use the Knox Library? I have no answer to that. Certainly no one suggested it to me, and I never thought of it - to my shame.

It was in Switzerland that I first discovered a user-friendly library. In the Baptist Seminary at Rüslikon I found an environment which made using the library a pleasure. Certainly the design helped. The newspaper and journal reading room was separate from any study area. It was comfortable, accessible, central to the whole complex, and it was the place where one met everyone else. Conversation was not only allowed, it was encouraged. There were no restrictions on eating or drinking. The study and catalogue area was likewise quite separate from the stacks. This was the QUIET place. It was very well lit, had a good view, and was large, airy, with plenty of tables at which to work. The issuing room and the stacks were in a separate area. Here there was a reasonable amount of noise. Trolleys, questions, footsteps, conversations.

It was this separation or delineation of functions which made the Library less intimidating, even welcoming. I wish I could say the same thing for

the staff. The librarian had a problem with those of us who used books. She really preferred that all books be in the correct place on the shelves, not in a student's study, and certainly not having the pages made less than pristine by usage. She took to hiding the new books away so that students couldn't find them! Hundreds of them. Eventually she was fired.

I also like the system there. Unlimited book borrowing - both in number and in length of time. But very good recall facilities so that one never waited more than a day to get access to a book. It was for me a very good experience of a library system. It has linked to it an excellent subject index developed by one of the Professors with assistance from Library staff and students so that research time was not consumed by unnecessary searching for material.

Two other libraries deserve mention

The University of London library I found quite intimidating. I felt oppressed and as if I was an intruder. I was a post-graduate research student and I could not get access to the stacks. One went to the card catalogue, selected the book required, gave a written request to the desk staff who within 45 minutes brought a copy to the desk where one was sitting. It was due back the same day. Sometimes the book was at another location of the same library outside London and it was the following day before the book arrived. I found it a very oppressive system. Here were all these books, all this information, and it was like trying to get a third mortgage from your bank to retrieve it.

The Library at Southwestern Seminary in Texas is I believe the largest theological library in the USA with nearly 300,000 volumes, a new building and a very sophisticated computerized catalogue system. It was friendly enough, and the information was readily available through the computer terminals. It was reasonably quiet, not cathedral like silence as the really QUIET area was again partitioned off and VERY quiet. In the main library soft drink machines, areas for conversation, thought, dozing and newspaper and journal reading were scattered through its floors.

But even so it was difficult to break into the system. I was a new faculty member. No one suggested that new faculty members might need to learn how to use the library. O the computer was easy enough. But how to make use of all this information. Was it all readily accessible? Where did the bound copies of the periodicals live? How could I find something

which the computer couldn't tell me? Why not ask a Librarian you ask? Why not I ask myself? The Head Librarian treated me exceedingly kindly. Among a faculty of 150 full time staff plus at least twice that number of tutors and adjunct faculty, he recognised me, called me by name, walked with me, and talked about New Zealand. Why didn't I tell him I was wasting so much time finding my way around? It was my fault I guess. But new faculty members have needs too. I needed to be treated by him as a consumer, a customer, a client, and not just a colleague. I did need his help. I certainly got the impression that he thought all faculty members could/should find their way around the library system without help. I couldn't.

A library usage survey

So armed with this background I went to the students and teaching staff of ACTE and asked them some questions about their experience of our libraries (St Johns & Baptist). The survey is informal and as useful or as useless as most such surveys are. Much of it I think you could work out yourselves if you sat down together and discussed such things as user education, reference, environment, purpose, library-faculty-administration relationships. But it did help clarify some things for me. So here are the results.

Of our respondent users 84% have had some previous tertiary education. The response from students reflects the numbers in each year group, and comes from about half the combined student body. The response from faculty members is over 90%. The following chart indicates frequency of library use among respondents:

User Group	Every day	2-3x week	1x week	1x month
1st year	47	32	21	
2nd year	60	30	10	
3rd year	50	50		
Faculty	10	60	10	10
Of all respondents		81		

Reasons for use of library

First year students used it overwhelmingly for reading the newspaper, their own personal study, reading recommended books and using books in the stacks. They do not read periodicals. Only 15% did so. Second year students used it 100% for newspaper reading, personal study, reading recommended titles and using books in the stacks. 80% read periodicals in the library. Third year students had a similar usage pattern.

Faculty members and research students did not use the library for newspaper or personal study (no surprise there), nor for recommended reading. They did use the books on the stacks (90%) and they did read the periodicals (90%). Again no surprises.

But the pattern is clear. First year students don't read periodicals. They probably (certainly) have enough to do learning the basis of a subject and they don't have the framework for absorbing the information contained in periodical literature.

But can we break this down further? Yes. And it's probably not surprising.

Very few people - teaching staff or students use periodical index material - such as Old and New Testament Abstracts or Religion Index 1 and 2. 58% of those surveyed said they never read any at all. 33% read it infrequently and only 4% read it often. If one deletes the faculty members who teach in the areas of Old and New Testament - only 1 student and 1 teaching staff person actually reads them at all.

Neither it appears do many people read the ephemeral/pamphlet material. In our survey only 13% said they read such material often, and all were Faculty members. 46% replied Never, and 40% replied only infrequently.

On the other hand 57% said they used encyclopedias and dictionaries often. And to my surprise this included 40% of Faculty members, and higher proportions of 3rd and 2nd year students than first year students. Only 38% of first year students said they read such material often, while 80% of second year and 100% of 3rd year students replied that they did read such material often.

So the usage patterns are not really surprising - only to me that of encyclopedias and dictionaries. I would have guessed that the usage of such material would have declined as students moved through the educational process. But Faculty members and research students still use such material more often than I would have guessed.

How do our students find material?

Obviously the catalogue is the first place to look. 100% in all categories consulted the catalogue. 45% of 1st year students said they also browsed through the shelves but this figure reduced in later years so that no 3rd year students replied that they used this method - even in conjunction with other methods. Only 16% of Faculty members browsed shelves, yet 33% said they would ask the Librarian, as did 50% of 3rd year students, 20% of 2nd year students and only 8% of first year students.

It obviously becomes easier to ask the Librarian the longer one relates to the Library.

We also asked about attitudes to the Library concerning borrowing, finding books, and finding information. What users liked and disliked. There are no percentages here as we tried to get impressions of what was helpful and unhelpful.

Multiple borrowing (how many books); the ease of borrowing; the system of borrowing and staff all rated very highly. As did the system of reserving major text books for class use. One of the interesting features was that to find information many students simply asked fellow students. The environment also came in for praise. Warmth, view, location and layout were all praised. So were staff. Friendly, efficient, helpful were terms used often.

Dislikes included the abuse of the system by fellow students. This was mentioned again and again. Books were unable to be found. The subject index and/or vertical file material was too limited. The short borrowing time was mentioned often by faculty members. A different system of journal classification and display was requested - alphabetising is not good enough, many said. Noise is obviously a great problem. It was the single most mentioned dislike. Yet alongside this was a clearly expressed need to be able to talk/discuss/have sufficient privacy, to hold a conversation.

Teaching staff monopolies of periodical literature was mentioned regularly. And some felt quite clearly that the ordering of books reflected the interests of teaching staff and not a balance of available literature. This came through clearly from those who had studied in other institutions and did not find on the shelves the books they expected.

What makes using the Library difficult?

'The lock on the door', said one. This was echoed again and again. Students and Faculty clearly expect that the library will be open when they need it. Some anger was expressed about Library closing times. Some still felt the Library was difficult to use and was not 'for them'. Both new and long serving Faculty members expressed views which indicated they 'struggle' with the system.

What makes using the Library easy? Accessibility, proximity; staff.

So where does all this leave us?

One issue for me is user-education and the recognition of the different needs of the users. As a child in an adult library I was recognised as someone who needed help and I received it every week. The Wanganui Public Library adult section remains warm in my memory. But as a post-graduate student at London and a new faculty member in Texas, my needs went unrecognised. They were I believe greater. But a combination of expectations, status, and a sense of 'not belonging' crippled me as a library user. We need to work harder on user education. The beginning student, the new-to-campus-student; the academically disadvantaged student, the new faculty member and the part-time teaching staff all have different needs. We dare not place our users in the Library's homogeniser.

The Biblical mandate is to correct oppression. We must protect those who are disadvantaged by the way others abuse the system. This is not just students. Faculty members expressed some anger about the way other Faculty members also abused the system.

There seemed to me a very definite expression of a gulf between some Faculty members and the Library staff. Subject-based liaison would seem a good place to start. And librarians ought not to feel any lack of credibility for their views just because they are alongside faculty members who generally possess a doctorate and are expected to engage in research and publication. Prestige (so-called) and credibility are not

the same thing. Library development ought to be a joint task of all who have the responsibility of theological education - teaching staff and librarians. Given that teaching staff will always outnumber librarians some good planning is essential. So while I rejoice in this meeting here in Auckland, I am also sorry that we are meeting separately from the ANZATS meeting in Perth later this year. Librarians cannot afford to separate themselves from the teaching staff.

Information finding is obviously the key to good theological education. This has to do with library education programmes. Faculty do not normally stress library use. Those of us on a semester system find that there is less time than previously to assimilate information and we seem to be involved in a sprint from day one semester one. So little class time is given to library use skills. Most faculty seem to rely on discussions with colleagues and materials in their own collections for their own use, and on the libraries reserve collections to meet the needs of students. Students obviously replicate this pattern by conferring with fellow students and buying their own books to supplement the reserve materials. So to develop good patterns of library usage some good liaison between classroom and library needs to be planned.

May I say a word about computerisation and OCR scanners? I'm glad that the subject is on your agenda in general terms. I look forward to the day when synopses of articles - even complete articles - are scanned into our library computers and through the use of Vertical File searching are made available to students and faculty alike. And when our Libraries are accessible to anyone with a modem who can search the catalogue and get bibliographical and subject information. Surely we must plan for this if our usage is to keep pace with the demand. It will be our fault if one of today's students has such a sorry testimony as mine about library usage in the early days of his or her career.

So don't be put off by arrogant Faculty members, Deans or whatever. The library is more important than any faculty member. I honestly believe that only two things are essential to educational institutions. One is students, the other is a Library. Teaching staff are only guides to the short cuts. So all strength to you. May your conference give you renewed vigor for the task.

Rev Harold Pidwell is Principal of the New Zealand Baptist Theological College, Auckland.



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THE REFERENCE INTERVIEW

Coral Ridling

I am both delighted and honoured to be here this morning, as your guest. Public Librarians regard themselves as being at the bottom of the pecking order whereas Theological Librarians, I imagine, are way up, perhaps even surpassing University Librarians. You - and I may be wrong, have a predictable clientele, whereas ours changes every minute. Certainly in the field of the Dewey 200s, our questions and requirements are much more basic.

I am a practical librarian and where theory and practice jockey for position, I will take the practical aspect every time. You are not going to receive from me an erudite address, just a few simple rules about "The Reference Interview". It is all so straightforward and once learned, the Librarian does it automatically. That is not to say that when we are tired, stressed, hungry, it's five minutes to closing time and there's a bus to catch, we aren't tempted to say 'Come back tomorrow' - but persevere we do, with a reference interview albeit in double quick time!

We're not perfect but we try and perhaps we all have sympathy with the librarian who has battled with a lady for fully half an hour. When finally the lady plaintively says "But where do I go now?" The librarian bluntly said "Go home!"

Today when people talk about their job they use such phrases as - 'a step in my career pattern', 'committed', 'they are upwardly mobile'. You are compelled to listen to me for the next half hour or so, so I may as well tell you where I stand. I'm a pit-face librarian, continually on the public floor since I started as a junior library assistant on 31.12.1945 (I can hear you mentally calculating!). There isn't a morning since that date when I've not wanted to go to work (and as this is a theological gathering, I wouldn't dare not tell the truth!)

I've spent 26 years in community librarianship and nearly 18 as a Reference Librarian and I still feel the excitement of using mind and experience to find the answers to questions which still challenge. And the only reward necessary is seeing the gratification on the face of the patron

(AP's new word for user, although if you've been around as long as I have, you will know that that was the term I was trained to use when I was 18).

If I could see into your minds I might be able to read thoughts like - "Who does this old girl think she's fooling!" - or more hopefully - "Well, yes, I can see that that is possible". If you can't see it's possible, then you're in the wrong job. If you can, then you are ready for or busily proving the delights of the cut and thrust of the daily battle of retrieving from your patrons, the essence of what they require and leading them to the answers.

There are two types of reference librarians. Firstly those who have the natural gift and flair for greeting each inquirer as if they were old friends and consequently can engage in conversation from the word go. They are as rare as gold and just as valuable. I have on my staff a young Intermediate assistant who quite often greets the next person in the queue with "Hello Sunshine - what can I do for you?" I've even heard her address a middle aged Indian gentleman with "Your turn, Fred". Very startled he looked about him to see where Fred was. I've been guilty of a similar approach myself. Still on the phone when a gentleman approached the desk, I waved him to a seat. As I hung up the phone, I said to him, with a wide smile, "I'm all yours!"

The second and by far the larger group have to work at getting alongside the person on the other side of the desk.

This somewhat frivolous approach to my session is done for a reason. I want you to think that librarianship is FUN, whether you practise your skills in a children's library, public library, business library or a theological library. We have stereotyped ourselves to such a degree that it is like fighting to get out of prison, trying to persuade our patrons we are normal human beings with the added bonus of having been trained to treat each person who enters our library as the most important person for whom we cannot do enough. (Mind you this is sufficient in itself to scare away patrons, who are used to self service, instant this or that and hurry along the queue please.)

The desk I mentioned earlier, is a decided barrier. You will all know that when you are carrying a load of books, that is the moment when your users see you at your most vulnerable and therefore most approachable. You are away from the desk!

The catalogue is another barrier. Whoever thought that the public could find their way through the filing rules needs their head read! The public couldn't care less if half the entries for Gt. Britain are G.B. dash and the other half G.B. full stop. It hardly makes sense to a librarian let alone the user. So when they see you expertly flicking your way through the cards, of course they latch on to you. Computer catalogues are a godsend. They file A-Z with no thought of whether it should be dash or full stop.

And so we come to the Reference Interview.

First some Do's and Don't's

Do have a desk which is inviting - normal height with comfortable chairs in front so that you are on eye level with your patron and you are both relaxed. If you prefer a control type desk or have inherited one, with a shelf above hiding all your bits and pieces, be warned - it gives off signals of Keep Away, I'm Busy.

Do keep your machinery to one side so that no barrier exists.

Do use your machinery. **Don't** rely on your memory. Your patron is impressed as you whizz in and out of a database or dance round a catalogue searching for an elusive heading.

Do smile.

Don't be afraid to say - the patron asked you a sticky one!

Do say "Well, we'll track this down together."

Do collect a stack of opening phrases. "Yes" is very off putting and anyway try and smile while you're saying it. Very difficult.

"May I help you" is hard to beat but it does become monotonous.

Do try phrases in your conversation like "Are you finding everything you need?" "Are you writing a paper?" "Have you used this (indexes, set of volumes) before?" "How did you hear about it?" "Is this a personal interest of yours?"

Do listen.

Don't interrupt once the patron gets going.

Don't point.

Do get up off your chair and show a willingness to share the inquirer's quest for information.

Do make yourself a Where to Look File.

* * * * *

Why do we have to define types of reference interview?

Why do we have to train ourselves and our staff in the art of reference interview?

What is it about us that makes people phrase their questions in the broadest way possible?

Why do the professional journals continually devote pages to the reference interview?

The answer is easy but we who live comfortably with books and catalogues are very uneasy at accepting the answer.

WE INTIMIDATE THEM

To them we are obsessed with order - our shelves have books in order - they are classified with a series of numbers which defeat them - we live by the alphabet (and if you are in the business of interviewing new staff you will know what a foreign field that is to many). We have rules - no smoking, no eating, no drinking, no transistors, no walkmans playing loud enough to disturb, no talking at study tables. They think we are all highly qualified and breathe rarified air or at the other end of the scale we are part-timers who have a nice job sitting at a desk and reading books all day.

We always look busy - book in front of us, pen poised.

They don't want to appear ignorant of what libraries are about. They do not wish to disturb the halcyon peace. They haven't a clue about how to start their search but they are not going to let you know - just a lead is all they want and they'll do the next. So they take the broad view and ask for the largest category.

Like the girl who asked me for History. We got it down to European history, then to English, then to 18th century, then to books with pictures, then to pictures with people in them, then to coloured pictures, then to Costume and finally to patterns of 18th century English costume - she was going to a fancy dress party and wanted to make a dress! What was the matter with me that she couldn't rush up and say "I'm going to a party, I want to run up something - have you patterns for an 18th century female costume?" I could comfort myself by saying my grey hair put her off, but the same thing happens to the 25 year old assistant.

Now for the Interviews - only four types - simply stated so the roles stand out.

Neutral Question -

"The first step to active listening is to stop talking"

Librarian: Are you finding everything you want?
Patron: Well I'm just browsing. You might be able to help me. You see, in a weak moment I said I'd do an article on Sunday Schools for the Church Newsletter. Well - you know how it is - nobody volunteered and everyone looked at me, because if you even speak up at a meeting and seem capable of stringing two sentences together, bang you're it if they want a speaker or someone to write an article. Well, as I said, I was at this meeting and said "What's happened to Sunday Schools? Why aren't they thriving like they used to (peers at Librarian to ascertain age). You must know what they were like! So here I am all ready to go. Hey, perhaps you can help me. I've written the article and I just want a few line drawings of children looking at a Bible or listening to a story. A picture or two makes the article interesting don't you think?"

If the Librarian had interrupted at the first mention of Sunday School or even the second, the thread of the conversation was lost and the real enquiry might never have revealed itself.

Open-ended Question: - "Yes and No are banned words"

Librarian: May I help you?
Patron: I want to know where the section on Indians is.
Librarian: Which Indians interest you - Spanish, Indians, Indians of North America, Inhabitants of India, Fiji Indians?
Patron: I want the wigwam sort.
Librarian: They will be the Indians of North America. What particular aspect interests you?
Patron: Religion really.
Librarian: Now you've chosen a really wide subject. Can we narrow it down to something specific?
Patron: The Psalms
Librarian: Now we're really going to work at this one together.

Have you read something recently about the Psalms or the Red Indians?

Patron: Somebody was quoting from a Red Indian translation of the 23rd Psalm and I'd like a copy of all the words.

Closed Question:

Patron: Have you got a concordance?

Librarian: Yes - do you want a King James concordance?

Patron: No.

Librarian: Well, then a Revised Standard Version.

Patron: No.

Librarian: Perhaps a Good News version

Patron: Yes

Open and Closed Questions:

Patron: Have you ever been to Ephesus?

Librarian: Well yes I have, have you?

Patron: No

Librarian: Are you thinking of travelling there?

Patron: No

Librarian: Well you started the conversation, what is it about Ephesus which interests you?

Patron: The reading on Sunday was Acts 19 v.24-41 and I wanted to know more.

Librarian: I'll get a Bible and you can point out to me what you would like to know

Patron: *Later*, - that's it - the Silversmiths

Librarian: Why do the Silversmiths interest you?

Patron: I do a little jewellery making as a hobby and I thought I'd like to know about the models of the Temple of Diana (Artemis)

Librarian: You just want a picture of the Temple?

Patron: Yes

If library journals are not printing articles on how to conduct a reference interview, they are devoting space to how badly reference librarians answer questions and that world-wide the average of correctly answered questions is no more than 55%.

It is my personal opinion that such surveys are the brain children of administrative staff and as such, reflect only fleetingly the hurly burly of the public floor and the number of satisfied clients. The surveys rule that all questions should be double checked for accuracy - have the makers of the survey sunk into a chair with relief that they'd actually found a mention of what they were looking for- if it took an hour to find one mentioned, two hours it must be for a verification and even then it could be different. Try finding two encyclopedias which give the same population figures for Pitcairn Island! Wedding toast lists vary from country to country - which is right - and we've all been to those New Zealand weddings where the toast list goes on and on and we long for the wedding with just one.

When the surveys are compiled by librarians on the floor is the time I shall start to believe the results. One final touch and it is only that, for sometime in the future a session on interviewing patrons of other races is worthy of consideration. Rudimentary protocol is taught in larger libraries and those of you who work with Polynesian students must have much to impart to the rest of us. Influxes of Asian students present another facet. The reference interview goes on and on, ever changing. The reference librarian must do the same.

I want to end on another frivolous note - taken without permission and cut about from a Library Journal article, it is called:

Stupid reference questions: on how to win foes and irritate people.¹

If asked to list the ten most demanding professions, few people would mention librarianship. Most folks believe librarianship to be a snap. One merely sits at a desk all day waiting for questions. If the questions can be answered, great, but if not, that's fine too, for the librarian is paid even if the question can't be answered.

¹ Library Journal, October 15 1985. Mark Plaiss. Stupid Reference Questions.

If it were only that simple! The public just doesn't realise that librarianship is a high-pressure job. Daily, librarians are asked questions that cover the gamut of human knowledge. They are peppered with questions about science, poetry, mathematics, art, medicine, music, agriculture, business and philosophy. They are harried to find names, addresses, formulas, recipes, combinations, and quotations. But it's not these questions that cause the ulcers, heart attacks, and spastic colons. No, the gray hairs and ugly brown spots are caused by the stupid reference question.

Decorum demands that sport not be made of either the patron asking these questions or of the query itself. Such mockery, it is believed, is gauche and unprofessional. It would be as if a physician chuckled at a patient suffering from some hideous affliction or a priest laughed at some contrite soul in confession. Such things are just not done. Pure bosh, of course. I say it's time librarians strike back.

I know what you are thinking. Sure, this sounds great, but how can I do these things and still keep my job? Be subtle. Don't bray like a jackass.

Undoubtedly, everyone has a favourite stupid question, some flash of ignorance, that is permanently impressed upon the mind. Below is an exchange between an illiterate adolescent and me. I shall remember it always, and follows, here, verbatim.

Adolescent: Do you have any English books here?
MP: A book about England or English literature?
Adolescent: No, an English writer.
MP: You want a book written by an English author?
Adolescent: Yeah.
MP: Fiction or nonfiction?
Adolescent: Fiction, I think.
MP: Any particular period?
Adolescent: Wha?
MP: Do you want an author from any particular period?
Say, Victorian or neo-classical?
Adolescent: Just an English writer, man.
MP: How about Dickens?

Adolescent: Who?
MP: Charles Dickens.
Adolescent: Is he English?
MP: No, he was Yugoslavian.

Coral Ridling is a Social Sciences Librarian, Auckland Public Library.

The Librarian's Dilemma



Halfway up the stairs
is the stair where I sit.
It isn't very pleasant
but I have no choice about it.
I'm only the Librarian
—I'm not upon the Faculty
The Admin doesn't want me
so I don't know who I am.

So:

Halfway up the stairs
is the stair where I sit

I go there and I sit
and I ponder what it means
And I think that I will sit here
until somebody wants me...

For: Halfway up the stairs
isn't up and isn't down
It isn't in the library
and it isn't in the grounds.
So all sorts of funny thoughts
keep running through my head:
It isn't really anywhere
It's somewhere else instead!

—Peter Mendham (apologies to AAMilne)

ADAPTING THE REFERENCE INTERVIEW TO THE SPECIAL LIBRARY SITUATION : DIFFERENCES IN PHILOSOPHY

Marjorie Warwick

The difference between the reference interview in a special library situation compared with the same transaction in a public library is that the interview - and the results which stem from it - are the major performance appraisal parameters of a special library. The professional accountability of the special librarian will hinge mainly on the quality of the information given. This is the cutting edge of special library practice, and whilst it places considerable stress on the librarian, it also sets the adrenalin flowing, and with luck will often bring the sweet taste of success.

A lot of the transactions can be likened to fast food consumption - the information is required on the wing - it has to be satisfying - it is consumed, but if it does not plug the appetite instantly, and the quality is unsatisfactory, the customer will go to another outlet next time. Similarly, as with any other commercial enterprise, the quality of the product can be measured by the size of the market it retains. If the customers are satisfied they will return, but otherwise they will seek alternative providers of the product. When a library has as its catchment an in-house clientele, it has a captive market. However, because of the commonality of the organisation, lack of performance by the library staff is almost impossible to disguise. This performance is measured daily. One unsatisfactory or inaccurate answer to an inquirer will effectively blunt the credibility of the library. Weeks, months, or even years, of quality service can be destroyed by a careless response to a query.

Another critical difference between public and special libraries is the perception of the role of librarian. In a public library the librarian is seen as the dispenser of the information. To a certain extent the librarian is in control of the information, and will release as much, or as little, as they may so decide. Within the special library context the information is regarded as the resource of the organisation and the librarian is seen more in the roles of co-ordinator and facilitator. It is definitely a service role, and the measure of service expected from the librarian will match the level of service expected from other professional staff within the

organisation. This high expectation of the role of librarian enhances the reputation of our profession and it is important that the expectation continues to be met.

These prefatory remarks may be a little daunting to those of you who have not worked in special libraries, but I feel that they have a relevance to all librarians. Within the climate of the special library the primary responsibilities of the librarian are to understand the structure, politics and goals of the parent organisation and to supply the information required to meet these aims. This requires a continuing intellectual commitment to keep up to date with the developments which are happening within the organisation. You may wonder what all this has to do with the reference interview, but unless you understand these basic concepts one cannot operate effectively within the reference interview situation in a special library.

In 1984, Professor Anthony Debons, Professor of Information Science, at the School of Library and Information Science, University of Pittsburgh, was the guest speaker at the Annual General Meeting of the Auckland Chapter of SLISS. He described the course, which he had set up at Pittsburgh, to develop librarians into what he called 'Information Counsellors'. He believes that the following steps are necessary in the supply of information if one wants to evolve from a librarian to an information counsellor, ie. from the grub to the butterfly.

1. Knowledge
2. Comprehension
3. Application
4. Analysis
5. Synthesis
6. Evaluation

I think that this is a very good description of the stages to go through in the reference interview situation. Most special librarians follow this progression. We have transformed from grubs to butterflies without realising it. I intend to use Professor Debon's six points and go through them systematically with you as a useful methodology for conducting the reference interview.

Firstly - Knowledge

You will recall that I stated in my earlier remarks that the primary responsibility of the special librarian is a continual intellectual

commitment to the structure and operation of the parent organisation. This means that the librarian must have, at the very least, a superficial knowledge of the subjects involved, with the ability also to recognise the technical and commercial terminology. I think that it also demands a current awareness of the area in which the organisation operates, and in many cases this would mean a global awareness. Added to this, it is my contention that one of the major contributions that a special librarian can make in an age of specialists is accepting the role of perhaps the last of the generalists. This also includes cultivating a wide knowledge of current affairs.

Secondly - Comprehension

Unless one has knowledge one does not have comprehension. I realise that we could probably have a semantic argument over these terms, but one has to be able to comprehend something. When the inquirer asks the question the librarian has to be able to comprehend it, even if it is imperfectly. It is an essential part of the reference interview that in the early stages the inquirer has a degree of confidence in the librarian. If this is not generated by comprehending the request the interview will not be completed successfully.

Thirdly - Application

This third step transfers the result of the convergence of knowledge and comprehension to a further more practical stage. The librarian should now be able to retrieve information from the library resources or from bibliographic aids, either printed or electronic. There is a further inference at this stage. The librarian should have an in-depth knowledge of the library stock. There are many disadvantages of small, special collections, but the disadvantages are offset if the librarian has a thorough knowledge of the collection and a reasonable comprehension of the subject matter. The collection is then utilised to its greatest extent.

Fourthly - Analysis

Once a selection of material has been located, an analysis of the result of the search must be made. The specific needs of the inquirer should be analysed so that the material meets the required intellectual or/and technical level. For example, it would illustrate a lack of professional judgement to supply an accountant with an academic or scientific paper on a topic. It would be more appropriate to find the information in an economic or commercial publication. Conversely, a chemist would want the scientific paper.

Fifthly - Synthesis

The selected material must be put together in such a manner that it makes a coherent package. It should have a structure and consequential flow of development of the subject. The librarian needs to scan the material and ensure that it develops the theme and does not just regurgitate the seminal work. Unless one is asked to supply an exhaustive search - very unusual unless it is a basic research query - an intelligently selected package is what the inquirer wants.

Sixthly - Evaluation

At the end of the transaction the quality and relevance of the material should be evaluated in an interview with the requester. Unfortunately, sometimes it is only at this final stage that it becomes evident that the material was not as suitable or useful as the librarian had supposed. This is a sensitive time for both the inquirer and librarian, as both parties can be embarrassed by the end result. Often it is the inquirer, because they have been supplied with exactly what they asked for, but not what they wanted; or the librarian because they have made a fundamental error in assumptions earlier in the process. It is here that the fragility of the butterfly needs to regress to the more hardy grub!

I have always found this final stage a real learning process - ongoing throughout one's career. The processes of knowledge and comprehension are enhanced and developed each time this evaluation stage takes place. So finally, what are the qualities expected of a special librarian which will raise the success rate of the reference interview? I have thought long and hard about this and offer the following attributes:

- the intellect of a Mastermind
- the patience of a saint
- the deductive powers of a Sherlock Holmes
- the hide of a rhinoceros
- and a highly developed sense of humour to laugh at it all.

Marjorie Warwick, Librarian, Auckland Regional Authority.



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THE JOY OF BACKLOGS

Eunice M. Blair

In all the voluminous literature on librarianship, one topic has been almost entirely ignored, although it is a major feature in most libraries and the most conspicuous one in many. This topic is *library backlogs*, which have been so much accepted as a fact of life that no-one bothers to write about them. It is therefore reassuring to learn that serious interest is being shown at last.

Invitations recently went out to the First International Conference on Library Backlogs, which took place in September 1985. At least, it would have done, but unfortunately invitations went out two years late as a result of backlogs of work among the organisers. However, that the topic is of worldwide interest is shown by the acceptances that have already come in; more are expected when those invited have cleared sufficient of their backlogs to read the invitation.

The conference programme as planned makes interesting reading. The first session was devoted to the Uses of Backlogs. As the speakers would have explained, so far from being an accident of nature, an accumulation that creeps up on librarians unawares like a malignant growth, backlogs serve several valuable purposes and should therefore be retained or extended, in some circumstances at least. Advances include the permanent ability to plead understanding and lack of processing space; job security, in that there is always work waiting to be done, and job satisfaction, in that selection can be made from the backlog of work to suit the tastes of staff; and, perhaps greatest of all, the frustration of readers who have little or no access to recent acquisitions or to staff to whom they wish to turn for help, and the sense of power that this gives librarians.

The second session was entitled An Anatomy of Backlogs. In this, the various types of backlog and their various features would have been described in detail. The best known and most conspicuous type of backlog is the cataloguing backlog, which can lead to vast quantities of books awaiting processing. Since these take up room and almost certainly overflow into other areas, they can also serve as excuses for backlogs of

work in other areas. Almost equally satisfying is the acquisition backlog - books awaiting ordering. This should not grow so large that the cataloguing backlog begins to fall to dangerously low levels; nor should delays be so great that books go out of print, for it obviously depletes the cataloguing backlog when books do not arrive. A careful balance needs to be maintained to ensure optimal levels of both acquisition and cataloguing backlogs. Binding backlogs can also be fruitful of chaos and user frustration. There are of course many other kinds of backlog: all kinds of library work are amenable to backlogs, from the chief's correspondence through inter-library loan requests to routine desk enquiries.

The third session was concerned with an International Overview. One speaker would have proposed an International Inventory of Cataloguing Backlogs, kept on the computer and updated every year to keep pace with whatever movement occurred. Another (European) speaker would have advocated a European Communities approach - the building, with the aid of CEC funding, of a European Cataloguing Backlog Mountain, parallel to the Butter Mountain and the Wine Lake (with either of which it could perhaps be merged). Finally in this session, an International Exchange of Cataloguing Backlogs would have been suggested. This could take place at random since the books would remain inaccessible wherever they were.

These three rather general sessions were followed in the programme by more technical ones. One of these was entitled The Measurement of Backlogs; it was mainly concerned with cataloguing backlogs. One measure suggested was linear metres of shelving occupied, but the second speaker would have opposed this because many backlogs are not shelved; he would have advocated metric tonnes or cubic metres.

Performance Measurement followed. The most obvious measure is net growth, but ideally more sophisticated techniques are needed to measure movement. "Backlog flow analysis" was the title of one paper, which suggested similar methods to those used for the flow of slow moving glaciers. One particularly interesting measure is the ratio of backlog to processed stock, since this would enable libraries of different sizes to be compared; another possible ratio is backlog : intake.

In the Backlog Management and Development session speakers would have considered ways of maintaining and increasing backlogs, for

example by using elaborate processing methods such as putting stamps on pages 11, 22, 44, 55 ..., complex cataloguing rules, and very detailed classification with many analyticals. It might seem at first sight that few libraries have much to learn, but at the least some useful tips would have been passed on. As one speaker would have said, the holding of the conference itself would have contributed to the growth of backlogs (is this the real motive behind the enormous growth of conferences, seminars and workshops in recent years?). The organisation of backlogs so as to make them almost unmanageable has also reached a high level of sophistication - for example, in a good cataloguing backlog books will be untraceable, in a good correspondence backlog, individual letters will be buried, and so on; but here too there is bound to be something more to be learnt.

Backlog Erosion might have been expected to attract less interest, but one of the papers on the programme was unusual. This was by a geneticist who had specialised in breeding large and voracious bookworms and termites (as appropriate to the climate). He believed he had cultivated some new species which could eat through large backlogs in a matter of months. The problem with this solution, as another speaker would have pointed out, is that it is not easy to ensure that the creatures restrict themselves to backlogs. Indeed, in an experiment in one library they ate all the processed stock and half the catalogue over one weekend. In another, they started eating some of the more sedentary staff before they were noticed. However, as yet another speaker would have said, all these supposed problems would have had the effect of increasing backlogs all over the library; a huge cataloguing backlog could be created by ordering vast numbers of replacement books and replacing the last catalogue entries, and staff losses would also have led to greatly increased backlogs. It seems that the geneticist's new breeds would be welcomed only if they were either indiscriminate or could preferably be directed to other things in the library than the backlogs.

In contrast, the session on Enemies of Backlogs would probably have attracted general agreement. The obvious enemies are commonsense, efficiency, and concern with users; and ways of overcoming these handicaps would have been discussed, including the suggestion that staff who continued after warnings to exhibit any of the above hostile characteristics, should be asked to leave (preferably the profession, and not just the library where they were doing damage). The governments of many countries are both enemies of backlogs in that they are cutting

acquisition funds and friends in that they are also cutting staff; with good management, libraries should be able to do more to increase backlogs by having fewer staff than to erode them by a smaller intake.

Finally, a rather lighter note would have been struck. The last session was devoted to Backlog Promotion and Publicity. Examples of some striking posters were given in the programme, incorporating such slogans as BACKLOGS ARE THE BACKBONE OF BIBLIOGRAPHY and BACKLOGS ARE BEAUTIFUL. T-shirts had been designed with I'M BACKING BACKLOGS and MY BACKLOG IS BIGGER THAN YOURS on them. A well-known secondhand dealer, parading under the pseudonym of Bach and Logg, offered a prize for the Biggest Cataloguing Backlog as measured in cubic metres. The prize was to add to it the Second Biggest Cataloguing Backlog, for the transport of which the dealer would have paid. An annual competition to choose Miss Backlog would have been initiated, the winner to be the lady with the most impressive backlog figure.

Details were not forgotten in the organisation. For example, breakfast would have been eaten at lunch, lunch at dinner, and dinner at breakfast, because of backlogs in cooking and washing up. Beds would have been made in the evening, in some cases after the members of the conference had gone to bed. A novel dance was initially planned where the band would have been two numbers behind the dancers, but this was not considered practicable.

All in all, serious discussion of Backlogs seems now to have a real future. We can expect new titles to appear in the literature such as *First steps in backlogging and Fifty years among the backlogs of central Europe*. CONSPECTUS has an obvious application to backlogs, both nationally and internationally.

I must get back to my own backlog, which has been growing while I have been writing this.

Reprinted with permission. This article appeared originally in New Library World, January 1988.

NEWS

A New Chapter

As reported elsewhere, we have a new chapter of the Association. On Tuesday 4th July, at the conclusion of the conference, the New Zealand chapter of ANZILA was inaugurated. We trust they will find ways to overcome the tyranny of distance in order to meet together from time to time.

Need a professional librarian with a theological degree? Fiona Parker completed a B.Theol (MCD) in 1986, and is now completing her Graduate Diploma in Librarianship at the Melbourne Institute (formerly Melbourne CAE) and is interested in obtaining a full-time position in a theological library. If you can help Fiona, please ring her on (03)808 6599 mornings or after 8 pm.

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