CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Richard H. Mintel

It is an honour and a privilege for me to address this assembly of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association Conference and for the opportunity to live and work in Australia for seven months.

First of all, I bring greetings from the American Theological Library Association which met in conference just one week ago. It would have been good to have been able to share with you the highlights of that conference. As it was, that conference was taking place as I was travelling to Australia this past week.

My task is to speak with you concerning current developments in the American Theological Library Association. The most recent development I am sure of is the changing of presidents at the annual conference. Under the present organizational structure, the vice-president for a particular fiscal year becomes the president of the following fiscal year. As of July 1st, the new president of the American Theological Library Association is James W. Dunkly, Librarian at Episcopal Divinity and Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

At this same meeting, the membership was to act upon a proposal for a totally new organizational structure. The work of the task force charged with the new organizational structure proposal is part of a larger on-going process within the Association to institute more effective resource management and policy control. This process has included the establishment of a financial management committee, the employment of an association controller, a strengthening of reporting procedures, the moving towards unified budget, and the centralizing of activities at one location.

Essentially, the task force has responded to three impulses within the Association and its governing structure. First is the impulse to move to a single governing board. (The present structure includes a board of directors for membership activity, and two program boards for index and preservation activities). In recent years these two boards have formed a joint executive committee and centered their activities at one location. The task force has proposed that it would be beneficial to consolidate the policy formation functions in one entity and create a unified chain of management responsibility. The second impulse is the need for salaried executive leadership. The third impulse has been the need to establish a financial management program consistent with the full dimension of the Association's products and services.

The task force proposal calls for a two-phase implementation. The first phase is transitional over the next two or three years. The second phase is the implementation of the new organizational structure. This structure will include a board of directors with an executive committee, a finance committee, and a committee for planning and development. Responsible to the board of directors will be a full-time salaried executive director who will supervise two positions: a director of programs (including indexes and preservation) and a director of member services (including annual conferences, continuing education, publications, and special interest groups).

Under the present structure, the membership elects members of the Association to the board of directors. Under the new structure, the membership elects nine of twelve board members, the board of directors electing the remaining three, who need not be members of the Association. Under the present structure, the membership elects the president of the Association. Under the new structure, the board of directors elects a chairperson of the board of directors from among the nine directors who have been elected by the membership, and who also serves as president of the Association and has a renewable term instead of a one year term.

Looking back over the past year, outgoing president Eugene McLeod made the following observations:

1) Membership remained strong statistically as well as in the level of participation. We gained five new institutional members, bringing that total to 181.

2) Participation of personal members was at a high level. Approximately 200 registrants for the 1989 annual conference is an indicator. All but a few of them were either full or associate members, two categories which totalled 397 at the time. Another indicator is the number of members serving in an official capacity. There were 61 members serving as officer, board member, committee member, or representative to an outside agency. Many more participated in special interest groups (including Public Service, Bibliographic Systems, Collection Evaluation and Development, Publications, OCLC Theological Users Group, and Bib-Base Users Group).

3) The level of membership participation together with excellence in programming and hosting made the 1989 annual conference one of the best we have had.

4) The Index staff and the Preservation staff, already working under one Director but in separate locations, were brought together in a single location and became quickly a highly dedicated and productive group. (Beginning in July, 1990, the offices of the Executive Secretary will be at the same location and will be the official address of the Association).

5) The Index program continued its excellent products with an enviable on-time production schedule and expanded its product line to include on-line and CD-ROM availability. It also won major grant support ($375,000) for its International Christian Literature Development Project (a three-year project of creating an index of Christian literature from the non-Western churches).

6) The Preservation program solidified its position as a national leader in preservation microfilming, evidenced in part by receiving a two-year grant ($210,000) from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

7) Some other recent developments are also worthy of mention. Of the 181 institutional members of the Association, some 70 percent claim OCLC membership. In an effort to further co-operation among ATLA libraries, OCLC records of ATLA member library holdings have been brought together into a unique subset of the OCLC database called the American Theological Users Group (ATUG) which can be used by logging onto the Interlibrary Loan Subsystem which will display complete holdings for the title owned by ATLA libraries. The most recent actions of the Board of Directors of ATLA include the establishment of an ad hoc committee on automation and technology; assignment to the new president, as an official project, the expansion of the ATLA membership among the librarians with involvement in religious and theological bibliography in non-theological libraries; and recognition of the formation of a new special interest group in rare books. At the June 1989 annual meeting the Publication Committee celebrated the publication of the fiftieth title of monographs and bibliographies which have been published through the partnership of ATLA and Scarecrow Press since 1972.

Also at the 1989 annual conference much concern was demonstrated by a special program and resolution concerning the use of chemically stable paper. I quote the resolution, skipping the "whereases":

Be it resolved, first, that the full membership of the American Theological Library Association confirm the Board's support of the American Library Association resolution on the use of chemically stable paper; and, further

Be it resolved, that the American Theological Library Association's president and executive secretary inform the American Library Association, and religious publishing houses of the Association's action as well as request clarification on the use of chemically stable paper by each publisher with which they communicate; and

Be it further resolved that the American Theological Library Association's Collection Evaluation and Development Committee monitor responses from publishers on this matter and organize a

letter writing campaign by member libraries to religious publishing houses that do not currently use chemically stable paper".

This resolution was unanimously adopted.

Finally, although not officially a recent trend in ATLA, but certainly a trend in theological librarianship was the formation of the Theological Electronic Media Group.

A meeting at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, last year marked the first gathering of this group of library personnel whose interest and expertise is in the field of theological electronic media.
Members held discussions on issues, such as the need for standardized cataloguing and the implications of the Seoul Manifesto, a statement on communication in theological education recently proposed by the World Association of Christian Communicators. They viewed videotaped tours of other theological institutions. Most importantly, they laid the groundwork for a support network to exchange information about the explosion of media technology and the ways in which they can share and access each other's archives.

A second meeting is planned this year with "Enhancing the Theological Classroom" as the primary theme. In the meantime, participants will compile a national mailing list, begin a newsletter, and produce a videotape designed to train faculty in the importance and use of media in theological education.

I hope that this brief reflection of recent developments has given you some idea of the work, concerns, and future of the American Theological Library Association.

Richard H. Mintel.

• ◦ • • • • • • • • •