

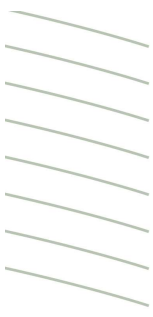
# Conference Summary

Philip Harvey

Here is my informal and distinctly selective summary of ‘Connecting People, Ideas, Learning’, the 33rd conference of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association (ANZTLA), held at The Women’s College, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, on the 11th-14th of July 2018. These words, which are inflected with thoughts about the passing of time, were delivered during the handover session.

We still build Dewey numbers in the time-honoured way, though the Dewey books themselves are being phased out in favour of online schedules. Does anyone use Web Dewey? A head count showed: not a lot and more for reference than the classification numbers. Kim Robinson (Mary Andrews College, Sydney) claimed a record for 26 numbers after the decimal point, only to warn the Dewey-eyed cataloguers assembled that this was *too long* and *not the way to go*. How far is too far with a Dewey number? The answer seems to be, it’s up to us. We may want to stretch the number around the front cover if it suits our specialisation, or keep it as simple as possible. Some things never change.

Maria Stanton (American Theological Library Association) gave the keynote address, which reminded me of a time when ANZTLA’s relationship with ATLA was much more tenuous than today. She quoted the historian Shelby Foote: “A university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library.” We pondered this Zen koan. “Quaint pre-internet days” was how Maria described the world before say 1995. Poor articles and bad science were out there then, peer-reviewed or not, but today students swim in fake academic material. Who asks the questions about this? We do, the librarians. We step in and offer ways of challenging contemporary

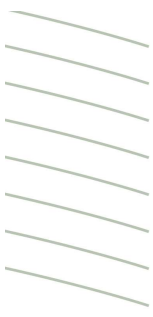


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misinformation and identifying what is authentic. How to develop a thesis or an argument? The onus on us has increased to train students in these practices. Assistance with identification of copyright law issues – did I do anything like that thirty years ago? No. Open access publishing has been around for fifteen years. We need the understanding of all of this because we are the one who people come to, to sort it out. We keep learning to provide access, whatever the mode of access. Another work that Maria called “a chunky complicated thing” is the institutional repository. That’s our job: chunky complicated things. Community has always been there in our libraries, but today our ability to make community has increased to provide a special service to our schools. We support faculty and students, and while the library is physically there we can better provide our services and meet our own special objectives.

Mandy Lupton explained YouTube as an example of user-driven connected learning. Bow Drill Boy showed what he was doing and asked what he needed to know: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuFsDN8dsJU> It’s network learning that draws on the wisdom of the group. Education is something you can do for yourself. You don’t have to wait for education to come to you. Levering digital networks is what we are doing, and Bow Drill Boy did not go to the local library to lever the answer. Connected learning developed out of youth identification networking, in particular marginalised youth. In other words, this is a whole way of doing shared learning unimaginable when ANZTLA was founded.

It was affirming to be told that we are GLAM. Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums. We didn’t think of ourselves as GLAM back in the day, but Erin Mollenhauer (Moore College Library, Sydney) brought us up to date. Special collections are our responsibility and our pride. We must preserve, record and show off our special collections. They are an asset for our institutions and researchers. But we have to think of the future too. Time is ticking. Erin warned us that



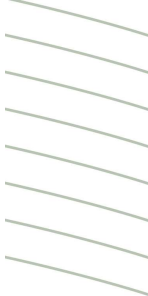
2025 is the last chance to convert audiovisual materials. Digitisation is not itself digital preservation, Erin admonished. CDs, magic sticks and flash drives are *not* archives.

We have always lived, as librarians, with people's needs and experience of knowledge and information. It's our bread and butter. Kate Davis (Digital Life Lab, University of Southern Queensland) talked about information practice. Today we need to be aware of the holistic focus on people's complete view of the world itself and everything they encounter that impacts on study. 79% of people are living on social media much of the time; younger people even more than older people. It's mind boggling. We need to be more aware of the lived experience. I was struck by Kate's admission that social media is her office, her lounge room, her car, her everywhere and that, freakily, this is my world as well. It is a state of social interaction that pre-millennial librarians did not grow up knowing. We are invited to adapt.

It is good to know that a librarian is an evolving role. We don't want to get stuck in the past, after all! Digitisation, research data, bibliometrics, and visualisation are examples of our evolution. According to Angela Hannan and Felicity Berends (Centre for Digital Scholarship, University of Queensland Library) digital humanities gather, create, and disseminate scholarly knowledge. Theological librarians are digital humanists. We break down silos. We may shadow researchers to figure out how they collaborate. We develop projects. We use guides to text mining and text analysis by following UQ Library to Locations to Centre for Digital Scholarship, then scroll to Text Analysis Software then click the link called Text Mining and Text Analysis Guide. This is evolution. Do we have sufficiently developed foundational digital skills? If not, we may want to apply for a Digital Skills Driving License. It's never too late. After this session, the Award for Most Used Word at the ANZTLA Conference had to go to 'Digital'.

Friday morning we were reminded that of the building of libraries there is no end, contrary to the urban myth that no one uses libraries. ACU Banyo's new library extension affords magnificent views of Brisbane and is designed to accommodate more students more of the time. We also visited a workshop that can supply a library with every signage need, with no sharp edges to cut fingers or snap when dropped.

Clare Thorpe (Library Quality and Planning, University of Southern Queensland) spoke on evidence-based practice, evaluating our collections and services. This practice first took off in 1997, so even though it was going on before then, it is now part of library life. Clare's library is the first in Australia with a staff member dedicated entirely to this one job. It is about making librarians great, she said. We have to be advocates for our libraries, so we need a backpack of evidence, ideas, and statistics. This is not about "how good are we!", but about how good are we in serving our users. This has remained true through time, we are there for others.



I doubt if a session on LGBTQI would have been feasible in the early days of ANZTLA, not least because the terms were neither subtly defined nor common language. Time-wise, it is significant that liberation, black, and feminist theology – already familiar to our libraries then – have informed the methodology of queer theology. Mark Hangartner (Subject Librarian, University of Auckland) skilfully demonstrated how a librarian reads, appreciates and utilises online bibliographies and databases.

Susan Thomas, Eve James, Stephen Morton, Jill Walker, Annette McGrath, Kelly Dann, and Elizabeth Greentree were this year's conference organizing committee. We are thankful to them for putting on this marvellous conference. Those with long memories will remember the first Brisbane conference held at what was then Pius XII Seminary in Banyo, today the site of Australian Catholic University Banyo and St Paul's Theological College. It is a sign of the passing of time that one of the members of the organizing committee of that conference, Carolyn Willadsen, reserved a seat at this year's conference dinner here at Women's College, but did not show, for what has been explained diplomatically as a senior's moment. Which only goes to show, it can happen to the best of us.

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