

THE FIRST DECADE: PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ANZTLA, 1995

A tenth birthday is certainly a time for celebration, but it is also a time for evaluation - for looking back and assessing the strengths and weaknesses, the successes and failures of the enterprise on which we embarked with great enthusiasm and some little trepidation on 27 August, 1985. This report seeks to reflect on the achievements of the past ten years, as it also poses some of the challenges which confront us in the years to come, many of which, unhappily, have been with us from the start.

The first aim of the association is to provide a forum for interaction between theological librarians. This aim has been carried out in the ten annual conferences which, with their primary concentration on professional development, have provided abundant opportunity for growth through interaction over the matters which concern us most as theological librarians. There has been a very deliberate effort to cover the whole gamut of library policies and practices. This practical emphasis has also pervaded the 26 issues of the *ANZTLA Newsletter*, edited successively by Kim Robinson, Lynn Pryor, and Irene Mills. It has functioned more as a professional magazine than simply a news bulletin. In addition to providing valuable input from the wider library community, the annual conference and the newsletter have been a stimulus to creative thinking, research and writing on the part of many of our own members. They have also provided abundant opportunity for personal interaction and mutual encouragement and support. Another important aid to communication between theological librarians has been Coralie Jenkin's *Collections of Religion and Theology in Australia and New Zealand*, published by Auslib Press in 1992.

The second aim of the Association is to foster the development and improvement of theological libraries. During the past decade, this has involved libraries in heavy commitments of time and money into information technology. While theological libraries have been some of the slowest to move in this direction (for the obvious lack of funds), it would seem that the majority of such libraries now have some form of automation, even if it be only the use of computers for the production of catalogue cards; however, it is equally obvious that the majority of theological libraries still lack sufficient information technology to provide adequate services to present-day research-oriented theological education. Where public access catalogues and compact disc indexes have been made available to users, libraries have experienced staggering increases in use of their facilities, reflecting the enormity of user demand still waiting to be satisfied.

Statistics which have been collected since 1984 reflect steady growth in library collections but steady growth is not really adequate in a situation in which spectacular growth is really called for. Nearly all theological schools now offer post-graduate courses of some kind or other, but the growth in the scope of programs offered has not generally been reflected in the development of research level or advanced study level collections. And, while there is some evidence of improved facilities for housing collections and providing services, there are still far too many libraries crammed into facilities which are inadequate in size and design to provide the services required by the present-day educational enterprise.

The third aim of the Association is to support the development and implementation of suitable standards of librarianship. This aim received a major boost with the adoption of the *ANZTLA Standards for Theological Libraries* in 1988. Whether librarians are consciously following these standards or whether they are developing better library practices from professional development opportunities and informal contacts provided by the Association, or by some other means altogether, there can be no doubt that the past decade has seen vast improvements to the service offered by most theological libraries. We have better qualified staff providing better quality services. Improvement is specially noticeable in the areas of reference services, bibliographic searching, interlibrary loans, and access to resources outside the home library.

One of the most important tools for providing most of the above-mentioned services is the *Australasian Religion Index*, a singularly outstanding product, which must stand as the crowning achievement of the ANZTLA in its first decade. Founded by Gary Gorman and John Mills in 1989, it now covers 74 Australasian periodicals, indexed by 26 volunteer indexers. Under the expert guidance of Lawrence McIntosh, as Managing Editor, for its first seven years, it stands not only as a superb example of unselfish commitment and interlibrary co-operation by all involved in its production, but as an invaluable aid to

theological study and research.

The fourth aim of the Association is to foster interlibrary co-operation. Within the ANZTLA, interlibrary co-operation is a major function of the regional chapters. However, on a wider level, it is reflected particularly in the *Australasian Union Lists of Serials in Theological Collections (AULOTS)*, the second edition of which was edited by Hans Arns and Marianne Dacy in 1990 and the third edition in preparation, under the guidance of Ken Elder. It continues to meet a very real need, because many of the libraries which use it and have their holdings listed in it are not involved in either the Australian Bibliographic Network or the New Zealand Bibliographic Network. Therein, of course, lies one of the major problems for the vast majority of theological libraries in Australia and New Zealand; being isolated from the national bibliographies, they are cut off from the main avenue of access to library resources in our two countries and from the most powerful tool for interlibrary co-operation available to us today. A further consequence is the lack of involvement in the Distributed National Collection, which offers the best hope for co-operative collection development among theological libraries - one of the biggest needs and biggest challenges facing the ANZTLA at the end of its first decade.

The fifth aim of the Association is to publish and distribute literature on theological librarianship. Many of its achievements in this area have been mentioned already: the newsletter, the standards, the directory, the union list, and the index. Apart from these, there are two further publications which are worthy of special mention, one produced by Lawrence McIntosh and one produced for him. His *A Style Manual for the Presentation of Paper and Theses in Religion and Theology* sold 1000 copies in its first year and is now into its second printing. Just off the press is the Festschrift honouring him on his retirement, *So Great a Cloud of Witnesses*, edited by Philip Harvey and Lynn Pryor. This is both a major contribution to the literature of theological librarianship and a valuable collection of articles on theology.

The sixth aim of the Association is to foster contacts with other library associations and groups. While there have been some sporadic contacts with kindred groups in the United States and Europe, our main focus has rightly been on Asia and the Pacific Islands. While the ANZTLA has made significant financial contributions in both of these areas and has enjoyed some personal contacts, it is obvious there is tremendous scope for further co-operation and mutual assistance.

It is obvious from this casual survey of the successes and failures of the ANZTLA in its first decade that the successes relate to those activities which involve little or no financial cost, and that the failures relate mainly to those activities in which cost is a major factor. One hates to keep repeating the same tired theme, but the fact of the matter is that, while there may have been some progress in terms of staff numbers and dollars to spend, the vast majority of our libraries are grossly under-staffed, under-funded, and under-resourced; and, in this respect, the situation has not changed much from what it was ten years ago. As far as the ANZTLA is concerned, it is significant that the failures lie mainly in those areas which are largely outside of the control of the librarians, as individuals and as a group; and that, by contrast, the librarians are having an impact on those aspects of librarianship which are not overly dependent of finance. In particular, there has been considerable progress in the quality of services provided in most libraries, and for this the ANZTLA must deserve much of the credit. It has given theological librarians a sense of identity and a unity of purpose which was certainly not in evidence a decade ago.

(Rev.) Trevor Zweck
President

MAXIMISING RESOURCES AT ANZTLA'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

The tenth annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association was held at Burgmann College, 21-24 September, 1995, Canberra, on the campus of the Australian National University and in the same city as the inaugural conference, with a record attendance of 55, and with the city's Floriade festival providing an attractive backdrop and occasional diversion.