CHAPTER 4

A Cathedral Perspective on Theological Libraries

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This chapter will consider the particular situation of cathedral libraries, focusing mainly on the Church of England with reference also to the Church in Wales. Cathedrals present a unique environment. Each is an independent body outside the diocesan structure but intimately connected with it, and while cathedrals may appear to present a homogenous grouping, in fact each cathedral is unique in its context, history and the way those factors affect its contemporary life. I will introduce some of these issues, and then consider current pressures and priorities affecting cathedrals generally. The libraries that operate within the wider cathedral context face distinctive challenges, and after exploring these I will discuss some examples of successful strategies employed by individual cathedrals. Finally, the relationship between ABTAPL and cathedral libraries will be considered: not all cathedrals have libraries which fall within the remit of ABTAPL, so only a small number of cathedrals are mentioned specifically in what follows. The cathedrals mentioned were selected for a number of reasons. Cathedrals currently or recently members

of ABTAPL were approached directly to explore their experience and their relationship with ABTAPL. An email to all cathedral libraries elicited responses from other cathedrals which do not have a relationship with ABTAPL but did see something in their recent work that spoke to the issues to be raised in this chapter. I am very grateful to all those colleagues who generously gave their time and experience towards this endeavour.

Cathedral libraries appear as they do today because of centuries – and occasionally millennia – of historical development. Libraries have been integral to the functioning of cathedrals since their foundation, providing service books – liturgical and biblical – to support worship, as well as theological works for contemplative reading (particularly in the monastic foundations). Books were produced in and for the cathedral's monastic and clerical communities. Monks and clergy figured amongst the students of the earliest universities, and monastic institutions would expect to see the books provided to support university education return to the monastery when the monk finally achieved the end of his university career. Depredations such as at the Reformation and dissolution of monasteries turned the focus of scholarly collections away from church institutions to private collections, or created a new impetus for university collections. In the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, efforts renewed to reconnect cathedrals with clerical education, with theological colleges being established in close proximity to cathedrals. All of this history has left its mark on cathedral collections, and individual stories can be traced today in the current nature of specific cathedral libraries.

Contemporary cathedral libraries face particular issues arising from their situation within a place of worship that is also a visitor attraction. The worshiping life includes its daily round of services through which it develops a ministry both to occasional or one-off worshippers and to regular congregations. This includes morning and evening prayer (or Evensong) daily, a daily celebration of the Eucharist, Sunday services, and, since Covid, there are those who participate through online streaming of services. There is no day of the year when Norwich Cathedral holds no form of worship. A period during the first Covid lockdown when all churches were closed represented the first time closure happened since the early thirteenth century. This may be why that experience affected such places of worship and impacted the wider community so deeply. The legacy of those days only five years ago continues to affect cathedrals, although perhaps not consciously as a feature of daily planning.

The other side of a cathedral's role as a place of worship is through its status as the seat of the Bishop, its position outside the parochial system, and its profile as a regional centre for the established church. This brings certain diocesan services such as Chrism eucharists and ordinations, but also regional and national services: high-profile memorial services, distribution of Maundy money,[1] regional and national commemorations, carol services for schools and organisations, as well as huge and, currently, increasing congregations at the cathedral's own carol services.

Alongside this fundamental element of the life and work of a cathedral is its ministry to visitors. Much current thinking regards how visitors may arrive as tourists, but we seek to inspire them to leave as pilgrims, enunciating an understanding of the nature of the place and its potential for positively impacting those who arrive. The language of pilgrimage has been present in cathedral ministry for the majority of their history. It was an integral part of pre-Reformation life and part of the revival of consideration of cathedrals and their ministry, initiated a century ago by the publication of a seminal work by Frank Bennett, then Dean of Chester (Bennett, 1925). More recently, the work of the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at the University of York has undertaken research which has guided thinking and policy in cathedral studies. The current interest in pilgrimage stems from two main sources: the desire to express a sense of the spiritual without specifically relating that to a particular faith or denomination, leading cathedrals and other Church of England churches to stress the spirituality of the building and the importance of the sacred space; and mental health and well-being agendas which promote walking and visiting places of cultural heritage, enabling cathedrals to position themselves as departure points or destinations for such walks. The British Pilgrimage Trust is a leader in this area at present.

The need to raise funds for the maintenance of these historic buildings and for the continuation of their daily work has become a more acute issue over the last twenty years, as sources of government funding have reduced. Some cathedrals' extreme financial difficulties have been significant in the development of a new Cathedrals Measure in 2021, in accordance with which cathedrals have revised governance and implemented new structures and checks. This has led to a sense of a shift within cathedrals to even more focus on finances which, whilst essential to the continued good management of cathedrals as organisations, has also inevitably led to some level of questioning of the money-making capacity of all areas of cathedral life. Cathedrals,

in this as in all other areas of life, are not a monolithic group; different cathedrals derive their income, or relative proportions of it, from different sources. Norwich Cathedral was recently cited as having the greatest value of assets, largely because it has a property portfolio retained over centuries (Ashworth 2023). In contrast, new cathedrals established in the twentieth century often find themselves without any such endowment. Some longer-established cathedrals also find themselves in difficulties, with Peterborough Cathedral (founded as a monastic community in 654 AD) announcing recurring financial problems as recently as January 2025 (Jones 2025). Cathedrals which are established tourist attractions draw large amounts of income from such visitors, and set entrance fees in order to capitalise on this interest; they suffered significant loss of income during the Covid lockdowns and recovery period.

Historically, about half of the cathedrals of England and Wales (differences pertain in Scotland and Northern Ireland) derive from monastic foundations. The others were secular; secular in this context indicates a foundation other than a monastery, such as a college of priests. Norwich Cathedral is one of those which began life as a Benedictine priory, and it continues today to seek inspiration and guidance from that heritage in the shaping of the life and work of the cathedral. We relate our work to the three Benedictine areas of worship, hospitality, and learning, although all three areas differ from the monastic equivalent, as the cathedral interprets them in the context of engagement with the contemporary world. Whilst this structure offers a clear conceptual space in which the library can function within the wider life of the cathedral, it also highlights that the position of the library in a modern cathedral is very different from that of the monastic library. Cathedral libraries continue to function as places of study and research, but they now also provide opportunities for visitor attraction and interaction, drawing people into an encounter and prolonging the time they stay at the cathedral. Libraries often perform their functions in subtle ways that underlie rather than lead the cathedral agenda. This fact is illustrated by the academic literature about cathedrals; libraries are not mentioned in the majority of significant books about the work of cathedrals to have been published in the last twenty years (for example, Dyas 2021; Dyas and Jenkins 2021; Francis 2015; Muskett 2019; and Platten and Lewis 1998, 2006); in the *Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, cathedral libraries receive only a passing reference in the chapter on special libraries (Meadows 2006).

Cathedral libraries are as varied as the cathedrals within which they are located. Some are important historical collections, firmly rooted in the institution; some suffered more than others at the Reformation and dissolution of the monasteries; some did not even exist at the time of the Reformation; some cathedrals have no library. The larger and more significant collections tend to be historical rather than modern, and to lean towards academic areas such as history, literature and art history rather than theology. There are, almost inevitably, pockets within cathedral collections of theological work – the historic collection at Norwich Cathedral is probably around 60% theology – but because the collections have largely been developed by donation – individual works or entire libraries – they reflect the interests of the donors. Even if these donors were clergymen, then bearing in mind the clergy must have attended university, they represent an educated part of society and their tastes were typically much wider ranging than just theology. Where cathedral libraries are collecting modern texts today, these are often more geared towards supporting aspects of understanding the life and work of the cathedral: history, architecture, art history; rather than pursuing theological studies, which apparently tend to happen elsewhere.

There is a perception that clergy will automatically look towards the cathedral to seek resources for study and learning. This may stem from a move in the early twentieth century to reinvigorate relationships between cathedrals and their dioceses, pursued in a variety of ways. The establishment of theological colleges in or near cathedrals (see below) aimed to encourage clergy to see the cathedral as a resource for theological study. Having a member of diocesan clergy as a Canon Residentiary aimed to enable more integrated working and understanding – at Norwich, for example, the Rev. John Bowers held concurrently the positions of Bishop of Thetford, Archdeacon of Lynn and Canon Residentiary (1910–1926). More recently, a member of diocesan clergy sits on chapter to represent the College of Canons. However, these moves do not inherently lead the clergy to expect to seek theological library resources at a cathedral. This is compounded by alumni access to university library facilities, presence of a diocesan library (another story in itself, but one that will be referred to again in this chapter), purchasing of own books, or decline in reading.[2] Despite there being little apparent call from the clergy for access to theological resources at a cathedral library, the perception persists at least among some deans and chapters that this is a resource that the cathedral ought to provide, and once available, miraculously clergy will flood to

avail themselves of the opportunity. In my experience – corroborated by other cathedral librarians – this is not the case. Norwich Cathedral library has some devoted clergy users, regular borrowers who are delighted to have the access to a theological library, and are very happy to support it financially through the (modest) annual subscription. However, many clergy feel no incentive to investigate the facilities, and even when it is brought directly to their attention, it simply does not fit in with their way of life and study. This discrepancy creates a potential for tension between the strategic thinking of a chapter and the reality as perceived by operational staff.

Modern theological collections often sit alongside historic collections that include, but are likely not limited to, theological texts, and the varying needs of both collections are an active part of the librarian's work. Book collections at cathedrals have tended to grow largely by donation, either of individual items, or of complete libraries; so, for example, the largest collection within the library of Canterbury Cathedral comprises the libraries of an archbishop and his personal secretary (Canterbury Cathedral 2025; Fremantle and Herring 2004). The library at St Edmundsbury Cathedral is a parish library developed by Dr. Miles Mosse for the then parish church of St James, in order to be a resource for training clergy, but includes other works such as histories and a cosmology (Dart, n.d.). Norwich Cathedral's historic collection includes donations from an individual whose interests were largely antiquarian and literary, and from a clergyman whose major interest outside theology was in classical literature. Historic collections, therefore, are not solely theological, and are used, insofar as they are used at all, for the multifarious purposes that the diverse nature of the collections encourages.

Many cathedral collections are not well used at all: visibility of collections is an issue, unless the collections are large enough to have achieved inclusion in the union catalogue Library Hub Discover (Jisc, n.d.).[3] This resource does provide access to a specific element of cathedral libraries, through the inclusion of pre-1701 foreign imprints in cathedral libraries from the Cathedral Libraries Catalogue; the catalogue is also accessible through CERL (McLeod et al. 1984). Cathedral libraries were also surveyed for the compilation of the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC 2025) and the Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (ISTC 2016), making other pockets of their collections discernible to a wider audience. Otherwise, catalogue access is very much on an individual cathedral basis, and dependent on the resources – financial and professional – of each individual cathedral.

The modern collections that may sit alongside rare books collections tend to have developed to interpret the cathedral, its buildings, life and work, and so likely represent history, art history and architecture. Some (few) cathedrals have a specific modern theology collection, for example Hereford, Durham and Norwich. Much of Hereford's library activity is driven by its two great collection highlights: the Mappa Mundi, with its related exhibition, and the Chained Library. The current librarian at Hereford Cathedral describes the modern collection as "theology, but as broad as it can be." Much of the collection development is focused on supporting and interpreting the Mappa Mundi – geography, cartography, bibliography – or to build some sense of continuation of the Chained Library – theology and geography. The library is open to the public, and encourages use by students and scholars, perceiving itself to be a space where theology may be encountered, even by those not immediately seeking it (Jennifer Dumbelton, Zoom conversation, December 3, 2024). The modern collection at Norwich is unusual in its size, as it includes the library of a former theological college which was closed in 1995; the books came to Norwich Cathedral in 2003. Durham Cathedral's Sharp Library was established by the Lord Crewe charity as a lending library of modern theology. Salisbury Cathedral library has good links with Sarum College Library, a centre for theological learning and ministry training situated in Salisbury Cathedral Close, which maintains a working library for the use of its students. Salisbury Cathedral library ceased to operate as a theological library some years ago, but the reciprocal relationship with Sarum College ensures that the college can refer historical questions to the cathedral and the cathedral can refer modern theological needs to the college (Emily Naish and Anne Dutton, Zoom conversation, January 8, 2025).

A further model is exemplified by the library of St Davids Cathedral in Wales, where the Library Development Officer actively encourages a view of the library as a hub for information. In her words, "joined up thinking doesn't just happen, it takes work" (Mari James, pers. comm. December 11, 2024). Readers are welcome to consult the physical collections, but the library places an emphasis on signposting to other relevant resources. This is partly necessitated by alienation of collections – a number of cathedral libraries (typically historic rather than modern theological collections) have been relocated to university libraries, often then retained as specific collections within the university's Special Collections. Examples include Bangor Cathedral (Wales), now in Bangor University, whilst Ripon Cathedral's collection is in the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. It also demonstrates

a fundamental principle of librarianship, that librarians seek to unite information seekers with the information that they seek. That may not be represented within the library which they have visited, but part of honouring cathedral libraries as living libraries, not merely a visitor attraction, is that the library staff perform the function of assisting such enquiries.

Canterbury and Winchester both report their modern collections as being largely interpretative of the buildings and historic collections, but each also has a further story to tell about seeking appropriate library expression within the cathedral context; that of Canterbury will be told later in this chapter. The user base of Winchester's library is primarily academic; alongside this there is a commitment to build a collection to be available for volunteers to consult. Volunteers are fundamental to the running of every cathedral, widening the cathedral's capacity to offer a range of services that might otherwise not be possible. The cathedral can offer its volunteers a fulfilling engagement with the cathedral and a sense of achievement in furthering its mission. The cathedral then supports its volunteers to perform their roles, as Winchester is demonstrating in its commitment to developing library resources for volunteers. Volunteers may not be carrying out academic research, but need to consult or reference things to improve their understanding. The library at Winchester was located on the triforium, along with the archive collection. The triforium was redeveloped as a permanent exhibition "Kings and Scribes", with a grant from the then Heritage Lottery Fund; the project was carried out 2014–2019. The archive was deposited with the Hampshire Record Office; the library was dispersed and stored in locations across the cathedral's estate. At the point of writing, a singular space for the storage and access of the collections has not been achieved and work is ongoing to develop the modern reference collection strategy (Eleanor Swire, Zoom conversation, January 6, 2025).

The Winchester experience illustrates the issue of space within a cathedral setting. Cathedrals tend to be one of the largest buildings in their cities, but the space available for ancillary activities can often be limited and under significant pressure. The issue at Winchester is lack of accessible space for the books, compounded by lack of reading room – the two usually share a single space, although this is not always the case. But with neither, there is very little scope for making the books accessible. For other cathedrals, the space may be dedicated, but its location can have profound effects on the way the library can be used and how it interacts with the rest of the cathedral and its life.

The library at St Davids is on an upper floor above a chapel dedicated to St Thomas Becket. The library is not physically visible from the cathedral, but access has to be maintained sensitively; for example, library visitors cannot be sent out into the cathedral in the middle of a funeral (Mari James, email, December 11, 2024). The lack of visibility is mitigated at St Davids by library display cases in the north transept of the cathedral, highlighting the existence of the collection (Mari James, Zoom conversation, December 18, 2024). Access to the library spaces is often limited physically because its only ingress is via a spiral staircase, and because the staircase is accessed from a cathedral transept, so services must be taken into consideration; similar access pertains at both Salisbury and Wells. The libraries at Norwich and Hereford are both accessed independently of the cathedral, but this limits their visibility, and the ease of visitor flow. This situation is not always completely negative, as the library does not necessarily want all cathedral visitors to come in.

For those libraries that do maintain significant modern collections as well as historic collections, the librarian's energies become split between two very different collection management styles. The historic collection needs to be passed on to our successors – it represents something of the history of the cathedral and the people who have interacted with it. For St Davids Cathedral library, this means recognizing the environmental impact of visitors in the library. For instance, an open library session raises the relative humidity in the library by 3 or 4%, so the library is given rest days in between open days (Mari James, Zoom conversation, December 18, 2024). At Salisbury Cathedral, the number of people at any one time is strictly controlled within the limited space of the library (Emily Naish and Anne Dutton, Zoom conversation, January 8, 2025).

Modern theology collections are typically not, as a whole, intended for preservation; some items will necessarily be disposed of as part of overall collection management. Access to the collections varies – at Norwich, the modern theology collections are freely accessible for browsing, whereas access to the historic collection is managed by appointment for researchers, supervised access for group visits, or exhibitions curated by library staff. These activities are more labour-intensive than the freer access allowed for the modern collections, so although the modern collection is three times the size, the staff time allocated to its management is considerably less.

Cathedrals have varying relationships with local higher education establishments. At Durham, the modern theological collection

provides one point of connection between cathedral and university, as the Sharp Library is open to university staff and students both as study space and to borrow books using the Durham University Campus card. York Minister has a librarian jointly funded by the University of York, with a role in both institutions; university students are encouraged to access the collections, and the Minster library collection is accessible via the University of York library catalogue. At Norwich, the relationship between university and cathedral library is less formal, although since the inception of a Library Advisory Committee, there has always been representation on that Committee from the library of the University of East Anglia (UEA). On a departmental level, the best relationships between the university and Norwich Cathedral library over the last twenty years have developed with the School of Literature and Creative Writing. Joint ventures have included student presentations responding to a sculpture in the cathedral; BA and MA teaching sessions using early modern books from the collection; library visits by CHASE students; and engagement with the labyrinth, led by the cathedral librarian, for students on health courses.

Most cathedrals provide learning to a range of target audiences over a wide age range, varying from informal to formal. Many of these opportunities are developed separately from library provision; most cathedrals have a team dedicated to work with schools, families and young people. More proximity of interest with the work of cathedral libraries may lie in the area of adult education. Both St Paul's Cathedral (2025) and Westminster Abbey (2025) run institutes devoted to public engagement offering a theological perspective on contemporary issues. St Albans Cathedral (2024a) has another example of a full adult learning programme including talks, workshops and reading groups. A more formal offering is the certificate in theology (St Albans Cathedral Certificate in Theology 2024b). Norwich Cathedral was inspired by the model provided by St Albans Cathedral when devising its programme of theological teaching, which operates under the title of Norwich Centre for Christian Learning, or NCCL (Norwich Cathedral, n.d.). This is very much an initiative of the Norwich Cathedral Library, offering theological education in an area which has no university-level theological teaching. There is no formal curriculum or assessment, but anyone can sign up for a single session or for as many as are on offer. The teaching takes place in the library; NCCL learners are encouraged to use the library, and some library users enroll in NCCL sessions, but any such reciprocal relationship is encouraged implicitly rather than being in any way enforced.

Another potential relationship for cathedral libraries is with Church of England ministry training. The zeal of reformers that affected the Church of England in the nineteenth century sought to bring cathedrals and dioceses closer together through the training of diocesan clergy (Burns 1999, 146). This was intended as beneficial to both parties: reawakening the sense of the cathedral as a centre of learning, whilst improving the education of the clergy. The endeavour waned, more rapidly in some places than others (Anna James, pers. email, March 10, 2025), and subsequent changes to ministerial education have almost completely overtaken such relationships. A phase of developing diocesan libraries distinct from cathedral libraries ensued, followed by a depletion in the number of those diocesan libraries now remaining. Those cathedrals with a modern theological collection aim to advertise their availability to ministerial candidates as a supplementary resource to their official library provision. The following examples demonstrate creative thinking to engage with diocesan clergy.

At Norwich, the local ministry training takes place in the library for portions of the academic year. The aim is to embed the library in the consciousness of ministerial candidates, lay and ordained; inevitably the impact is partial, as some people embrace the resource whilst others remain unmoved (as do the books). Over the last twenty years, Norwich Cathedral Library has participated in diocesan lay and clergy training days, presented at local ministry course summer schools, and offered a Quiet Day package to diocesan clergy. All Diocese of Norwich curates are offered a placement at the cathedral which includes a visit to the library to learn more about its work. Local ministry students have some of their teaching in the library and have their library subscription paid for them for the duration of their studies. Diocesan directors of ordinands have encouraged those discerning a vocation to visit the library to find appropriate reading; a seminar-style discussion group for curates in conjunction with the cathedral and more specifically the library has also been trialled.[4] All these efforts yield some reward, and those clergy who do discover the library tell us that it is an invaluable resource.

A partnership approach was developed in Canterbury when, in 2003, a new library – St Augustine's Library – was opened in a building owned by the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury. The library was a partnership between Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Foundation and Canterbury Christ Church University. Books were provided from the former St Augustine's training college, and from Canterbury Christ Church University. The library survived for about ten years before

closure. Location can be vital to the success of such a project: in this case, the building lay between the cathedral precincts and the town, not closely associated physically with any of the participating bodies, and was not very visible. Longer term legacies of the project include development of positive relationships and continued use of books, as some were absorbed into the main Canterbury Christ Church University library. (Cressida Williams, Zoom conversation, February 27, 2025).

Durham Cathedral has also actively engaged with library provision for diocesan audiences. The Lord Crewe charity provides two theological libraries known as the Sharp libraries in the northeast of England, one in the Diocese of Newcastle's Church House, the other at Durham Cathedral (Lord Crewe's Charity 2025). In the past, the Durham Cathedral team endeavoured to connect diocesan audiences with the cathedral's Sharp Library, in line with the aspirations of the charity. This was not seen as successful: the target audiences were likely to be put off by parking constraints and had more convenient access to resources via the Religious Resources Centre at Cuthbert House, the Durham diocesan office. The Sharp Library is well-used by other audiences, in particular providing a popular resource for Durham University students of theology by introducing them to the cathedral community, a benefit shared by few other cathedrals. The cathedral is now concentrating its modern library outreach on the cathedral community, ensuring that it has the resources required to support its vision and strategy. Much of this growing audience is diocesan, and includes the cathedral's curate. (Alison Cullingford, Zoom conversation, January 3, 2025).

Hereford Cathedral has a modern theological collection which operates as a loan collection, although the majority of readers use it as a reference collection. Hereford reports similar experiences with lack of use by ordinands and clergy; the feeling is that clergy tend to amass their own libraries. There is a diocesan library for Hereford diocese, although this has been diminished and now occupies a single room in a community building in Ludlow. It does signpost users to the Cathedral library, demonstrating the attempt to provide publicity and connection between the various relevant collections. A further observation relating to the lack of use by clergy is simply the general decline in use of libraries, especially as resources to give access to books (Jennifer Dumbelton, Zoom conversation, December 3, 2024).

One phenomenon reported by both Hereford and Norwich is a recognition that the library reading room is increasingly being used as study space rather than as a place to access the library collection.

Theology is not a popular subject, but the sense of an appealing place in which to work seems to have grown, particularly since the Covid lockdowns. In part, this seems to be related to an increase in working from home: popular though this has proved, people need a variety of places in which to work so that they are not only in one and the same place all the time. A desire to find other appropriate working spaces has led some people to discover cathedral libraries. At the same time, public libraries become busier with alternative activities. The Millennium library in Norwich offers many community activities and is, furthermore, a popular haunt for local school children at the end of the school day. The cathedral library, on the contrary, offers usually a quieter space – quieter, not silent: this has been an issue reported by several cathedral libraries. Those with whom I have communicated tend not to offer "silent" study space: Durham Cathedral on its literature about the Sharp Library specifically notes that "The Sharp Library is (as you will have noticed) in a museum – it may be noisy during busy times, school visits, or guided tours. We're sorry for any disruption" (Durham Cathedral 2025). Norwich Cathedral has occasional issues when users advocate for greater levels of silence than are practicable in the shared nature of the space. Despite this, a regular user of Norwich Cathedral library recently commented that it is perceived to be a rare example of a scholarly library in the city, and therein lies much of its appeal to those seeking study space.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that libraries do not make money. In cathedrals, the money-making potential is explored with regard to the library as with any part of the cathedral's life and work. Where to impose charges is a fraught question in the cathedral world: some cathedrals charge entrance fees; others refuse to do this, but do make overt requests for donation. The decision is a theological one as well as a practical one: the Church of England, as the established church, offers itself to any member of the public, regardless of their faith, and the cathedral, as the mother church of the diocese, offers itself particularly to all within that diocese as a place of prayer and a source of comfort. Various approaches reflect the desire to offer a free welcome: Norwich Cathedral maintains a commitment to offering access free of charge, whilst encouraging visitors to make a donation. Some cathedrals that charge for entry have a system to waive the charge for local inhabitants; others allow access without charge to a chapel for prayer, and to the cathedral for worship. Where a cathedral library has a study space, encouraging readers to use the cathedral's catering facilities is an obvious way of achieving some form of fundraising

from visitors in a "soft" way. Norwich Cathedral library offers free use of the study space and books for reference only, but has an annual subscription fee for borrowing rights. Durham and Hereford are both committed to the use of the library being completely free of charge.

Many cathedral libraries offer public tours for a fee. At some cathedrals, this is arranged by and within the library; at other cathedrals the library tour offer is part of the wider visitor engagement team's planning. One of the significant issues arising from this is the need to balance different uses of the library space: whilst a cathedral library may not offer silent study space, having a tour at the same time as the reading room is being used for study is rarely a happy combination. Segregating user groups by allowing certain use at specific times means that the needs of the user at the time can be focused upon, although it necessarily limits the available time for any one group of users. Norwich Cathedral attempts to manage this by having the library open to the general public on three days a week, leaving two days for booked groups, whether occasional tours or regular activities. Salisbury Cathedral library is open for use by appointment only.

Managing a theological library in a cathedral calls for lateral thinking and identifying how the collection can work in this context. One repeating theme among cathedral librarians is the sense that the librarian's role is very much part of the overall aim of the cathedral. This has distinct implications both for the public approach of the library and its staff, and also for the diffuse responsibilities that fall to the librarian. If the librarian is the only person a visitor will see, then the librarian represents the cathedral's ministry of hospitality and has a responsibility to act accordingly. The importance of the cathedral library as a gentle approach to the overtly religious space of the cathedral, and therefore the pastoral significance of the library and its staff, is perceived by many cathedral librarians. If the library can provide a way into the cathedral complex, then it has a role to play in welcoming that person, and perhaps giving them the support and guidance to enable them to take further steps along a spiritual journey, if that is right for them. St Davids Cathedral library encourages cathedral clergy to be a presence in the library, to further those pastoral encounters (Mari James, Zoom conversation, December 18, 2024).

The other aspect of the cathedral librarian's embeddedness within the wider cathedral is that the job is rarely solely that of librarian. Many librarians are not theology subject specialists; many also have responsibility for archives or object collections, or both. In some cathedrals, the person responsible for the library is not a trained librarian.

Some librarians find themselves engaging with areas beyond those of collections. For example, at Norwich, the librarian is actively engaged with Schools and Family Learning, assisting with delivery within these areas, as well as developing the cathedral's offering around its labyrinths, one a permanent structure in the cloister garth, the other a portable canvas labyrinth. This work is also a connection with the pilgrimage focus at Norwich Cathedral. Exhibitions, often of the cathedral's own collections, but also of external artists, is another area that may become part of the librarian's role. Some librarians have been called upon temporarily to cover a completely different area of work, due to the generally small staffs within a cathedral.

The lateral thinking required of a cathedral librarian is not only due to multiple responsibilities, but also because of the essential nature of the cathedral library that has been a fundamental issue in this chapter: that the library is not core to the cathedral and its purpose. This means that engagement with collections cannot be taken for granted, and experimenting with how to appeal to different audiences is an essential and ongoing aspect of the role. These various endeavours sometimes relate closely to what might be considered traditional library territory, and at other times feel quite distant. Many examples have already been alluded to: leading public tours of the library; preparing exhibitions of library collections, including the accompanying display notes; enabling visits by special interest groups; facilitating research access to collections; assisting with school visits; running lecture series and other public engagement programmes; developing theological learning courses; social media posts.

A former librarian of Wells Cathedral published a book derived from his experience of showing people around the library, and the frequently asked questions arising (Spears 2016). Stephen Dart has prepared a series of introductions to aspects of the Ancient Library at St Edmundsbury Cathedral, which are accessible through the cathedral website (e.g. Dart, n.d.). Engagement with Heritage Open Days is a way to engage with an audience beyond the normal confines of the cathedral; Norwich specifically highlights the library with a library drop-in event on the annual theme, and more recently added a joint family learning and library event. Norwich Cathedral library offers a monthly session of Lectio Divina, the contemplative reading of the Bible that forms a key part of Benedictine spirituality. Norwich Cathedral library also offers a weekly "Listening Lunch". Inspired by the monastic practice of silent meals with someone reading aloud, "Listening Lunch" similarly offers reading aloud from books in the cathedral

library collections to people who are invited to bring a packed lunch. After the reading, there is time to discuss the reading informally or simply to enjoy conversation with other participants.

Engagement with bodies such as ABTAPL enable the cathedral librarian to reach beyond the cathedral world to gain insights from a variety of related but different contexts - such as academic institutions, small and large institutions - to illuminate the contextual issues of the unique world of cathedrals. For some cathedral libraries, the nature of the collection and its use within the institutional aims render ABTAPL irrelevant, but for others, ABTAPL can provide a vital source of help and support. For me, ABTAPL, with a large proportion of its membership being college librarians managing modern loan collections, can provide a balance to the time and interest I give to the historic collection, and a reminder that the modern theology collection also needs active management, and is not just passively there on the shelves awaiting the next borrower. On the specific issue of dealing with noise in the library, a plea to college librarian members to share how they manage similar issues was a useful source of advice, providing access to wider experience from related albeit not exactly similar, library situations. Other cathedral librarians have expressed appreciation of the inter-library lending capacity of ABTAPL, enabling librarians to read literature that would otherwise be difficult to access. The theological expertise in the ABTAPL membership is useful to cathedral librarians managing theological collections but without that subject background. The sheer activity of ABTAPL enables librarians, often working alone in an institution which has little real understanding of libraries, to connect with fellow professionals, helping to overcome the sense of isolation.

The range of backgrounds of ABTAPL members is also helpful to those working in cathedrals: the world of the Church of England can present as quite monolithic, which is often not how it feels on the ground in a cathedral library. Engaging across the membership of ABTAPL helped one cathedral librarian identify a commonality with college librarians working in the context of small collections with small resources, rather than with those from large institutions, which might seem the more likely relationship for a librarian from the large institutional background of a cathedral and the Church of England.

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Notes

1 On Maundy Thursday the British monarch gives two bags of specially minted coins (known as the Maundy money) (Wright 1990, 15) to a group of recipients aged at least 65, in recognition of their service to the community and as a symbol of the monarch's Christ-like service to the people of the realm (Wright 1990, 5). The service is held annually at a different venue, often a cathedral (Wright 1990, 2).

2 A report on "Post-pandemic clergy wellbeing" highlights workload among challenges to clergy well-being, particularly "managing multiple vocational and administrative pressures" (Living Ministry Research Briefings 2025) and reading, one suspects, is an early casualty of this situation.

3 Now operated by Jisc, but created as the union catalogue of Research Libraries UK (RLUK, n.d.).

4 In the Church of England, most newly-ordained ministers take up a curacy for around three years; in this post they receive practical training in ministry from their incumbent, as well as ongoing training managed by the Diocesan Director of Ordinands.