CHAPTER 5

Common Awards

The Church and the Academy in Partnership; How a Collaboration Between the Church of England and Durham University is Supporting Theological Libraries

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When the Covid-19 pandemic struck in March 2020, libraries of every description were forced to close their doors. Some were able to introduce a limited loans service based on collection or postal delivery, but many were forced to go online only as teachers and learners at every level of education discovered the joys of Zoom and virtual learning.

Theological libraries in the UK were no exception, but a small group of mainly Anglican training institutions (TEIs[1]) were fortuitously well-placed to benefit from the generosity of suppliers and publishers who were suddenly falling over themselves to make their content available online. Two years earlier, Common Awards, a partnership led by the Church of England and Durham University to deliver a suite of academic programmes in theology, ministry, and mission to students preparing for ministry, had done a deal with SCM Press to make selected SCM titles available as e-books to all students across the TEIs

via the Common Awards Hub.[2] Access to the Atla Religion Database with AtlaSerials (Atla) and EBSCO's Religion & Philosophy Collection had already been secured. Thus, in March 2020, the infrastructure was in place for Common Awards to provide access to a range of content on a scale and at a speed which individual TEIs would have been hard-pressed to match on their own.

What is Common Awards?

Common Awards describes itself as a three-way partnership between TEIs, the Church of England and other participating churches,[3] and Durham University (Durham University 2024a). Common Awards is not an intuitive name, and for readers who are not familiar with the landscape of theological education in the UK (and even for those who are) it may need some unpacking. Unlike the Methodist Church of Great Britain, which sends its ordinands to a single training institution (my own institution, The Queen's Foundation in Birmingham), the Church of England has around twenty training institutions which offer a variety of training pathways, are all more or less independent,[4] and which differ from each other in a variety of ways. Ordinands, in consultation with their sponsoring diocese, get to choose where they go.

For our present purpose, two particular aspects of this diversity are worth noting. First, the different levels of library provision. Some TEIs have large libraries, a full-time, qualified librarian, and independent access to a range of online content. At the other end of the scale, some institutions have no physical site library at all (they may depend on other local libraries for access to printed books), and – prior to the arrival of the Common Awards Hub – would have had little or no online content of their own. It is therefore fair to say that from the outset, even before the start of the pandemic, the introduction of the Hub utterly transformed the learning environment for a large proportion of students at a single stroke.

Second, it used to be the case that each TEI negotiated the validation of its programmes by a university independently (as indeed many ABTAPL member institutions still do). From a library perspective, this led to some anomalies. Some validating universities offered access to electronic resources as part of the deal. Some didn't. Access to Atla was a key bone of contention. For TEIs this all changed when the Common Awards partnership was launched in 2014. Now almost all training programmes followed by Church of England ordinands are validated

by Durham University.[5] Although the university does not offer access to its own electronic resources to Common Awards students, nevertheless Common Awards itself, with its critical mass of over two thousand FTE students, is in a much stronger position to negotiate deals than individual TEIs and can also provide infrastructure on their behalf. The economies of scale are self-evident.

It is worth noting at this point that the imperative towards a collaborative arrangement and the benefits which have followed extend far beyond the provision of library resources. While Common Awards allows individual TEIs considerable flexibility in course design and recognizes the importance of having a wide range of diverse and distinctive training institutions, nevertheless by providing a common framework for its suite of programmes and accountability to a single university, it acts as a guarantor of academic standards. It also provides support and infrastructure across the board. This provision ranges from organising conferences and forums for the sharing of good practice to hosting individual TEIs' Moodle[6] sites and offering training and support in response to developments in online learning and artificial intelligence (AI). While there is some overlap between these aspects of Common Awards and library provision, the main focus of this chapter will be on the development of resources on the Common Awards Hub.

A point also needs to be made about the complex nature of the environment in which Common Awards operates. Not all TEI students are Anglican ordinands. Some of those who are not Anglican ordinands (they may be independent students or training for ordination in another denomination) study on Common Awards programmes while others are on non-accredited programmes or on programmes validated by another university. The latter have access to some resources on the Hub, such as EBSCO's Religion and Philosophy Collection, but not others, such as Atla.

Finally, there is a broader vision at the heart of Common Awards, which extends beyond the resourcing of TEIs. Several Church of England dioceses are also now signed up in order to support their lay and post-ordination training. The Scottish Episcopal Institute, which serves the Scottish Episcopal Church, and St Padarn's Institute, which trains ministers for the Church in Wales, are both members. And there are plans afoot to extend access to some Hub resources to all Church of England clergy and licensed readers. All this is indicative of the changing landscape of theological education and lifelong learning which no doubt will continue to evolve. But it is also an essential part

of the context of the story which follows. It does sometimes get rather complicated.

The Lambeth Palace Conference

In February 2016, a conference of Common Awards librarians was held at Lambeth Palace. The conference was convened by Dr. Ken Farrimond, Virtual Learning Environment and Blended Learning Officer for the Ministry Division[7] of the Church of England, and was attended by representatives of fifteen TEIs, most – but not all – of whom were librarians.

The purpose of the conference was to explore ways in which the benefits of Common Awards could be extended to library provision. In the two years since the launch of Common Awards, there had been a brief but unsuccessful experiment with a platform called CAVLE[8] to provide access to online resources. These included JSTOR[9] (funded by Durham University) and – for a trial period only – EBSCO's Religion & Philosophy Collection. But CAVLE was beset by technical difficulties and was not taken up by all TEIs. Now, Ken was keen to sound us out about what we would like to see on a new Common Awards "hub" which would be accessed within Moodle. Access to online journals was deemed to be the top priority and a key question was whether that access would be limited to Common Awards students or could be extended to all.

Common Awards had already introduced some other library-related benefits. These included Durham campus cards for all Common Awards students (which confer borrowing rights at Durham University library) and access to Durham's electronic resources for all TEI tutors. The latter is a considerable boon for a group of academics who might otherwise have no access to a university's e-resources. Campus cards, on the other hand, are of little practical use unless you happen to live nearby, though they do confer a sense of brand identity, which is valued by some students.

But perhaps the most significant potential benefit was SCONUL access,[10] a voluntary reciprocal arrangement between university libraries to grant students of one university entitlements at the library of another (SCONUL 2024). But the scheme is not straightforward. Not all libraries are members, and not all "host" libraries grant full entitlements to all students. Membership was initially granted to part-time Common Awards students, providing their "local" university was also

willing to "host" them, but even that partial privilege has now been withdrawn.

Another item on the conference agenda was e-books. Back in 2016, very few TEIs had significant collections of e-books, and some had none at all.[11] One of the problems was that core theological textbooks were simply not available on most platforms or were available only at an unaffordable price.

We were therefore pleased to have in attendance at Lambeth Palace Michael Addison, the Sales and Marketing Director of Hymns Ancient & Modern, and David Shervington, the newly appointed Senior Commissioning Editor for SCM Press, part of the Hymns Ancient & Modern group. SCM Press is a key publisher for TEIs, in particular for its *SCM Studyguides* and *SCM Core Texts* series. Michael and David were enthusiastic about resourcing theological education and were keen to explore how they could tap into the Common Awards market. We were keen to get access to their e-books at a price we could afford, and I had a strong sense that we were both pulling in the same direction. An idea was born.

The Common Awards – SCM Press E-books Initiative

By September 2016 the Common Awards Hub was up and running, providing limited access to JSTOR (as noted above) and full access to EBSCO's Religion & Philosophy Collection for all TEI students. At Queen's we were able to cancel our own Religion & Philosophy Collection subscription, thus saving £1,500 per annum. When Atla was later added, access was restricted to Common Awards students only. At Queen's we have significant numbers of students who are not on a Common Awards programme, so we have continued to subscribe to Atla independently, but for many TEIs the provision of online journals at no direct cost was a game changer.

In June 2017 I was invited by Ken to a meeting in London with Michael Addison. Our challenge was to find a way of meeting the need of students for online access to core texts without a detrimental impact on SCM's book sales, which are largely dependent on the student market. We discussed three options. One was for SCM to offer an e-book "taster" of each title, free of charge, on the Hub. This would have been something more than the 10% permitted by the UK Copyright Licencing Agency's Higher Education licence (Copyright Licencing Agency 2023), but well short of the whole book. The idea

was that this might boost print book sales, but it fell short of what librarians were asking for.

The second option was making content available on a third party's platform, such as EBSCO's Religion E-book Collection, to which Common Awards might then negotiate access. But this would have involved a complex range of behind-the-scenes deals, some of which would have been out of our hands. The prospect of a quick resolution was unlikely.

The third option was for SCM e-books to be made available on the Hub. Michael was interested in the idea of developing an "SCM classics" e-book collection, and from this emerged a proposal to identify 100 titles from the back catalogues of SCM Press and Canterbury Press (another Hymns Ancient & Modern imprint), to be selected ultimately by the publisher but after consultation with Common Awards librarians, with hosting costs met by Common Awards, and at a rate to be negotiated based on student numbers.

The SCM e-books were launched in May 2018. Interestingly, SCM Press initially withheld two of their bestselling titles in order to protect their print sales (the titles were added to the collection at a later date). Some of the titles selected were drawn from the "indicative reading" lists of Common Awards modules, and others were chosen on the recommendation of Common Awards librarians and based on loans data. But the list also included some slower selling titles to which SCM Press wanted to give wider exposure. It was an opportunity to showcase their stock, and links were provided to enable students to purchase print copies at a discount. All that remained was to see if the numbers would add up.

The initiative has clearly been a success. In the first year of operation alone 67% of eligible students accessed the collection, and each book was accessed by an average of 87 students. Unsurprisingly, the collection was especially well-used by students without easy access to a physical library.

From a library perspective it has reduced the need to invest in multiple print copies. But clearly SCM's print sales have not suffered disproportionately, if at all. They have continued to invest in the collection, adding twenty titles a year in consultation with librarians, the only caveat being that they insist on a one-year embargo on new titles.

Later we will reflect on some of the wider impacts of the Hub and in particular its impact on student reading lists. But for now we simply need to note the significance of the SCM e-books initiative in the development of the Common Awards Hub, and the part it played as a model for future deals.

Hub Plus

From the beginning, the vision for the Hub extended beyond the provision of access to online journals and e-books. It was seen as a place where TEIs could share best practice and their own in-house resources, and as a gateway for curated free online resources along the lines of Intute, the service funded by JISC [12] which was discontinued in 2011 (JISC 2010). This place has become Hub Plus.

The idea of sharing resources is an interesting one. Amongst theological educators (and indeed amongst librarians) there is a strong instinct to collaborate, and yet the institutional model of theological education supported by the Church of England is inherently adversarial. TEIs are essentially rivals, competing for students, sometimes to the point of their own survival.[13] They tend also to be fiercely independent and protective of their distinctive identity. There has been little evidence of resource sharing between TEIs.

The idea of a curated gateway is also interesting and has much to recommend it. One of the tools employed was to carry out (with permission) a data mining exercise of TEI websites to gather links to external resources, which were then reviewed by specialists and selectively added. There are now more than 1,500 resources on Hub Plus. But one of the challenges of a curated gateway is the cost of maintaining it. Links break and resources become outdated. This was essentially what led to the demise of Intute. One might also ask whether students are attracted by a curated gateway when many seem to be more inclined to do their own searching. From a librarian's perspective, the need for students to develop their search skills is arguably greater than ever, but the solution may lie in training rather than curation.

The Covid-19 Pandemic

In March 2020 the pandemic struck. Ken Farrimond quickly convened an online teaching workshop for TEI tutors, covering adult learning and pedagogy as well as the more technical aspects of delivery via Moodle. At this early stage, Big Blue Button emerged as the virtual classroom software of choice, but it was soon overtaken by Zoom, which quickly became ubiquitous.

Ken also convened an online meeting of Common Awards librarians to brief us on the latest developments. Access to EBSCO's Religion E-book Collection had been secured, but initially this was only available to

Common Awards students. Later it was extended to all students, and in 2021 we were able to cancel our own subscription.

A deal with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) was also imminent. This was similar to the deal with SCM Press, but initially only forty titles were made available, and a discount was included to take into account those students who had already signed up for an earlier and unrelated SPCK offering to individual Anglican ordinands.[14]

Of those publishers who were responding to the global crisis, T&T Clark were quickest off the mark, providing free access to their Theology & Religion Online collection. Cambridge University Press (CUP) were slower to get up and running, but the deal when it came was more extensive, with full access to all the *Cambridge Companions* as well as the *Cambridge History of Christianity* series. Moreover, the relationship with CUP has endured. T&T Clark withdrew their offering once the immediate crisis had passed, but usage data from the free trial period was used to negotiate a deal for ongoing access to the most relevant CUP content.

The point to note about this period of upheaval was that Common Awards with its critical mass of students and its existing infrastructure was much better placed to negotiate these deals than individual TEIs would have been. We were all beneficiaries. But the biggest test was still to come.

The Demise of Dawsonera

Dawson Books was a major supplier to libraries in the UK higher education sector, and many Common Awards librarians would have been familiar with them. In the early 2010s its e-book platform, Dawsonera, was an excellent way for smaller institutions to explore the brave new world of e-books at a time when, with increasing numbers of students studying mainly or exclusively at a distance, there was a strong imperative to make resources available online. Institutions could purchase as many – or as few – e-book titles as they wished. In 2011/12 we bought our first five titles at a cost of £164.79.

Dawsonera brought many obvious benefits, including multiple access to most titles, but there were also drawbacks, including the requirement for students to remember yet another login, and – as has already been noted – the cost of some titles and the lack of availability of others. Nevertheless, our e-book collection was growing and by

2020 we had more than forty titles. Amongst TEIs, St John's College, Nottingham was a pioneer of e-books and at the time of their closure in 2019, they owned 183 Dawsonera titles. What would happen to them?

Common Awards seized the moment. Amidst the chaos caused by the Covid pandemic they made a deal with Dawson Books to make all the St John's e-books available to all TEI students via the Hub. Furthermore, Dawson's agreed that other TEIs could contribute their Dawsonera e-books to the Hub, too. This raised an interesting question of fairness. Some TEIs would be contributing more than others. And there was a question of ownership. Were TEIs effectively relinquishing ownership of their collections? But these were minor details in what was clearly a win–win for everyone.

And then in June 2020, Dawson Books went into administration.

I imagine that many librarians around the country had to move fast at this point (if indeed they were actually ordering books at all at the height of the lockdown). We already had a (largely dormant) arrangement with Askews (part of the Little Group), so we were able to move our print book orders over to them fairly seamlessly. But the issue of access to our e-books at such a key moment suddenly became critical. I was grateful that Common Awards also moved fast. A deal was done with Browns Books (also part of the Little Group) to host the Dawsonera titles on their VLEbooks platform.

The Hub Today

Since the start of the pandemic and the tumultuous year which followed, the Hub has evolved. There are now more than 12,000 Hub e-books, of which EBSCO's Religion E-book Collection constitutes nearly 10,000. More than half of the remainder have been purchased on the VLEbooks platform (1,291 titles), and a smaller number of titles (451) have been purchased independently on the EBSCO platform, either because they were not available on VLEbooks at the time or because EBSCO offered a better deal. SCM (229), SPCK (84) and CUP (250) make up the rest of the collection.[15]

The Hub collection is thus inevitably something of a patchwork, a mixture of platforms, suppliers and interfaces. Even within individual platforms there may be different licensing models (ranging from single-user licences and 'credits'[16] to unlimited multiple access) as well as different rules about copying and printing and reading on different devices. This can be very confusing for students and is one

of the drawbacks of the Hub model. The single search portal is also very basic. It only allows for searching of the author, title and publisher fields, and the quality of the bibliographic data underpinning the collection is sometimes poor.

Another minor drawback is that TEIs are tied into the ordering schedules of Common Awards. In the past when we purchased our own Dawsonera e-books, we could order today and our students would have access tomorrow. Now we tend to have to wait a little longer. But there is flexibility in the system. Common Awards is a small team and are receptive to requests for urgency.

But the weaknesses are outweighed by the many benefits. By purchasing on the VLEbooks platform and – to a lesser extent – on the EBSCO platform, Common Awards has been able to purchase specifically to support the needs of TEIs. Librarians can pass on recommendations from tutors. The TEI from which the recommendation has come typically contributes 50% of the cost. The outcome is that TEI purchases are effectively subsidized and other TEIs reap the benefit free of charge.

There is some flexibility in the system here, too. Common Awards will usually purchase a more expensive licence (when available) than the one which an individual TEI might choose for itself in order to allow for the additional usage, which is likely to accrue. If a title is likely to be of use only to one TEI, then a cheaper licence may be purchased and access restricted to the single institution.

There has sometimes been a debate around the value of EBSCO's Religion Ebook Collection, which tends towards higher level academic texts rather than textbooks.[17] As a subscription database, it is also vulnerable to withdrawals, which can be frustrating for tutors who have chosen to gear their reading lists towards it. But it has two distinct benefits. One is the scale and quality of the collection. Ten thousand high quality academic titles represents a considerable online library, something which more closely replicates a well-stocked print library in its capacity to facilitate browsing and serendipity, which librarians will understand are key to resource discovery.

The second benefit is EBSCO's search functionality, which is far more sophisticated than that offered by Common Awards' single search portal. To find it, students have to come out of e-books and go into online journals (which is somewhat counterintuitive), which is where the links to the EBSCO databases are to be found. The EBSCO Religion E-book Collection can then be searched independently, making use of all the usual EBSCO functionality, including full text searching.

The Librarian Experience

One of the unintended consequences of the Common Awards Hub has been its potential to disempower TEI librarians. In the past, TEIs would have made independent decisions about library purchases, and are still free to do so, but the Hub has introduced a shift towards centralisation. Collection management is one of the key skills of the librarian, and while TEI librarians may still have an advisory role and can make recommendations, nevertheless much of the purchasing power has been delegated away from TEIs and towards Common Awards. The financial savings have been one of the benefits of this process of centralisation, but the sense of being deskilled, which some TEI librarians may experience, has been one of the costs.

This is most clearly exemplified in the selection of databases. In the past, if a database such as EBSCO's Religion E-book Collection was under consideration by a TEI, the librarian would consult with tutors, evaluate the database (for example, by matching it against student reading lists), set up a trial, monitor the usage, and review the results, perhaps in consultation with a Library Committee or some other advisory panel. Now it is much more likely that the database would be recommended to Common Awards. This is partly because Common Awards are likely to be able to negotiate a more cost-effective deal but also because locating the resource on the Hub brings the benefit of having all online resources in one place. It is, of course, open to TEIs to subscribe to databases, or any other resource, independently, and at Queen's we have maintained a number of our own online journal subscriptions. But independent subscriptions are less visible to students. The Hub has become the place to go.

The Student Experience

During the worst period of the Covid lockdown it was inevitable that access to print books was restricted. At Queen's we were able to offer a postal service to our students as well as a collection service to those who lived on site. But nevertheless our loans figures plummeted. The transition to online resources, which had already begun in response to the growing numbers of students who are rarely on site, went into overdrive, and our tutors were encouraged to make greater use of online journals and e-books on their reading lists. It is a trend which has continued.

It is worth pausing for a moment to examine the impact of the shift towards e-resources on the student experience. What do students make of the Common Awards Hub? Since its inception, Common Awards has conducted an annual student survey, and in its most recent iteration (2023/24) 93% of respondents agreed that the provision of learning resources in general (both print and online) was sufficient to support their studies (Durham University 2024b). It is hard to know exactly what this figure means, given that some students have considerably better access to resources than others, and because the relatively short duration of courses (typically two years) means that most students are not in a position to compare current provision with what went before. But nevertheless, 93% is a high figure however it is interpreted. It suggests that the Common Awards Hub is doing something right.

A slightly different picture emerged from our own annual library survey at the height of the Covid restrictions. At Queen's we have invested in both print and online resources over many years, so our students enjoy the best of both worlds, and regularly affirm the value of the library service they receive. But in the survey of March 2021, when the library had been closed for a year, there was a marked sense that some students were struggling with the dependence on e-resources (Queen's Foundation Library 2021). A variety of reasons were cited, including screen fatigue, sore eyes, and the mental challenge of sustaining 'deep' reading online, a finding which resonates with the claims of commentators such as Nicholas Carr that computer use is undermining our ability to read deeply and therefore also to think deeply (Carr 2010, 122–23).

Moreover the opportunity to browse a library on site was also clearly being missed. One respondent described it as the "biggest sadness" and another commented that "online resources do not adequately replicate the experience and learning that can be achieved from visiting the physical library."

The Common Awards Hub has considerably enhanced the service which librarians can offer by facilitating access to a wide range of resources to large numbers of students, many of whom are rarely or never on site. But nevertheless, it is reasonable to ask whether there might be losses as well as gains from a pedagogy which leans towards e-reading.

Diversifying the Common Awards Curriculum

Another interesting pedagogical question concerns the shaping of student reading lists. There is a sense in which recommended reading

has always been dependent on availability, whether in print or online. After all, there is little point in recommending a text to which students do not have access. But when reading lists are geared towards online collections, there may be a tendency for influence over student reading to shift away from institutions and towards the suppliers of the collections, whose motivations may be primarily financial.

The Common Awards Hub is rather different. On one hand, TEIs have some influence over what is purchased and can usually request titles that they want. On the other hand, there is the opportunity for Common Awards, drawing on all the theological and educational expertise at its disposal, to shape the Hub (and therefore student reading) in a direction which is determined by other – more pedagogical – considerations. This is what is happening with the Diversifying the Common Awards Curriculum project (Durham University 2024c).

The three-year project was set up in response to the report *From Lament to Action* on racism in the Church of England (Church of England 2021) and aims to support TEIs in creating a more diverse and inclusive experience for Common Awards students. Part of its remit is to make available a wider range of theological voices from the Global South and in the first year of the project over forty new e-books were added to the Hub collection. Annotated bibliographies have been compiled in different subject areas, and videos on good teaching practice have been created. There are plans to deliver workshops for staff and classes for students on engaging with different perspectives.

From a library perspective, the project is a good example of mutual support. Some of the titles recommended by TEIs to Common Awards fall within the remit of the project and are passed on to the project team for consideration. If selected, they are fully funded by the project. Other titles selected by the project team may act as a useful guide to TEIs (those with physical libraries) for their own stock selection.

The Future of the Common Awards Hub

The Hub is a work in progress. It is a regular agenda item at meetings of the Networked Learning Advisory Group, which advises the Ministry Development Team on all aspects of networked learning and of which I am a member as the TEI librarian representative. It is now approaching the next phase in its development, which is to introduce EBSCO's Discovery Service as its search interface. This will present students with a single search portal for the online journals, the e-books and

Hub Plus. Phase two of the project will involve inviting TEIs (for a fee) to include their own resources, so that students at a given TEI will be able to do a single search of all the resources which are available to them (but excluding those which are only available to students of other TEIs). It remains to be seen whether this will represent a 'lowest common denominator' approach to searching or will raise the standard to EBSCO's higher bar. But at the very least it will make life easier for students and will address some of the drawbacks discussed earlier.

Another challenge may come in the form of Perlego's digital library of e-books (Perlego 2024). Perlego's subscription service is not a conventional library service. The company has been operating since 2016 and now has a collection of over one million e-books which are primarily aimed at the student textbook market. Originally targeted at individual students, it is now competing for the library market by offering bulk subscriptions at a reduced cost. But students are still essentially individual subscribers. It is simply that the institution pays the cost.

This is one reason why Perlego would not be compatible with the Hub model. The other reason is financial. The cost of paying for individual subscriptions for every student, even at a reduced rate, would be huge. Perlego is most cost effective at the individual level. It is cheaper (by far) for students to subscribe to Perlego than it is for them to buy their own books. But in comparison with other library subscriptions, it is very expensive, and institutions need to think carefully about its cost effectiveness before going down the Perlego route.

But Perlego is popular amongst its many users, and for some students it may appear to be an appealing alternative to the Common Awards Hub. It has invested heavily in its functionality, including its accessibility features, and its collection is huge and multidisciplinary. But there are gaps in its coverage (neither Oxford nor Cambridge university presses are currently represented). It may complement the other resources to which TEI students have access, but it does not replace them.

From Perlego we can learn something of the challenges which are facing both the Common Awards Hub and libraries more generally. We live in a world in which students demand instant gratification and are easily dazzled by the appearance of modern technology. By comparison the Hub has been assembled on a shoestring and its achievement is all the more commendable for that. But it cannot afford to look and feel cheap.

The Wider Vision

There has always been a wider vision for the Common Awards Hub. As early as the Lambeth Palace conference in 2016, the hope was expressed that access to the resources of the Hub could be extended beyond the TEIs to the wider church. That vision has been partially realised by the inclusion of several dioceses to support their lay and post-ordination training. The next phase includes making the Hub available to all clergy and licensed readers in the Church of England and is indicative of the holistic vision at the heart of Common Awards which is to resource the lifelong learning of the church.

It is regrettable but inevitable that this only extends to the Church of England, and highlights both a weakness and also the considerable achievement of Common Awards. The weakness is that the project can often appear to be narrowly Anglican. Its achievement is that despite this, it is managing to resource so many students from other denominations.

Common Awards and ABTAPL

In November 2023, Ken Farrimond convened another meeting of Common Awards librarians to coincide with the ABTAPL Autumn Meeting in London. It is perhaps indicative of the relationship between Common Awards and ABTAPL that only seven delegates were able to attend. The lack of synergy between the two groups has been a curious truism throughout the period since the Hub was introduced and may be partly explained by the fact that many TEIs do not have a librarian, or at least not one with the time to attend meetings in London.

Ken has also set up a space on the Hub for Common Awards librarians to engage with each other, and yet we rarely do so. Why is this? One reason may be that we look to ABTAPL as our network and are disinclined to engage with multiple networks, or that we don't have time, or that as solo librarians we are happy just to get on with our own jobs, or that like ABTAPL libraries in general, we are characterised by our diversity and have less in common than one might expect.

But I suspect that another reason may simply be the success of the Hub project. We take so much of it for granted now, but where would we be without it? This chapter has sought to highlight the considerable

benefits which the Hub brings. These include the provision of a wider range of electronic resources than would otherwise be available to most TEIs and at a lower cost, the convenience of having everything in one place and accessed through TEIs' Moodle sites, and the flexibility to accommodate and respect the diversity of TEIs while also drawing on shared expertise in the area of collection development. It is driven by a vision of service to the wider church and it continues to evolve.

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Notes

1   The abbreviation stands for Theological Education Institution and is the term preferred by the Church of England for its training institutions.

2   The shared platform on which resources are hosted or accessed.

3   Of the other "participating churches," only the Methodist Church is represented on the Common Awards Management Board.

4   Some TEIs have a particularly close relationship with individual Church of England dioceses and may thus be said to be not entirely independent.

5   At the time of writing, one TEI has chosen to remain in partnership with another university and is not part of Common Awards.

6   The Virtual Learning Environment used by most TEIs.

7   Now renamed the Ministry Development Team.

8   CAVLE = Common Awards Virtual Learning Environment.

9   Just the Religion journals, which is a relatively small subset of the whole JSTOR collection. This was – and remains – only available to Common Awards students.

10   SCONUL = Society of College, National and University Libraries.

11   In my discussion group, five out of nine delegates said they had no e-books.

12   JISC = Joint Information Systems Committee. It was formerly a subcommittee of the Higher Education Funding Councils, but in 2012 it became a registered charity and was renamed Jisc.

13   One TEI, St. John's College, Nottingham, closed in 2019 for financial reasons.

14   With the support of the Clergy Support Trust, a library of over 1000 e-book titles had been made available to all Anglican ordinands and curates in training.

15   These figures were correct as of November 2024.

16   The 'credit' model permits a certain number of accesses per year, typically 300–400.

17   In 2015 we matched a sample of student reading lists against the EBSCO collection and found only 3.4% of the titles. This compared with 13.6% on the Dawsonera platform at the time.