CHAPTER 1

What are Theological Libraries?

CARISSE MICKEY BERRYHILL

> *I conceive of my work and that of my staff as a ministry as well as an aid in multiple future ministries. In a nutshell, the text we shared is thematic for me: We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses—past and present—speaking, dialoguing, sharing with those who would be witnesses today.*
>
> – John B. Trotti (2002)

Since antiquity, literate cultures have created libraries to preserve human knowledge and make it available to readers. Theological libraries today share with libraries in general the central functions of a modern library, including selection, acquisition, preservation, and description of resources in order to provide access to them. Like other libraries, theological libraries assist and instruct readers, advocate for the relevance of the library and of its resources to the mission of its community, create spaces suitable to the user community, provide platforms for disseminating faculty and student work, manage funds entrusted for all these purposes, and participate in policy making related to the library. What, then, are the distinctive characteristics of theological libraries?

In the first place, theological libraries specialize in texts viewed as sacred and in literature within and about the religious traditions that revere those sacred

texts. Some libraries are equipped with the expertise and facilities to collect and preserve manuscripts from antiquity. Beyond collecting manuscripts, translations, and editions of the sacred texts themselves, theological libraries accumulate the literature that grows up around the texts, produced by the communities that respect them. Related works include linguistic and textual criticism, commentaries, theological reflection, and application of the texts. Religious communities generate the literature of religious practice and community life, including ministry, ethics, worship, and religious arts. The memory of the community is embodied in archives and histories of the community, its activities, its controversies, its practitioners, and scholarly analyses of these materials.

In the second place, theological libraries vary in their constituencies. The constituent communities that create and support theological libraries are of different types: local or congregational, single-tradition, multiple-tradition, and extra-traditional. Although no typology fits every library, the main factor that differentiates these four types is the scope of the constituent community, whether in geography or ideology. Often the breadth of the constituency influences the depth of financial resources available to the institution and its library. The library participates in the teaching and learning efforts of its constituent community.

A theological library with a *local* constituency is one related to a neighborhood religious community. Since antiquity, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim congregations have kept collections of sacred books for reading and study directed by the congregation's leaders. Today an example of a local theological library would be a church library with a collection of tools for study of the sacred text, recordings of sermons or services, or videos for children inculcating the religious teachings of the congregation. Its users are likely to be local clergy or members of the congregation who are engaged in devotional reading, worship, teaching, or in religious instruction. Today the staff of a local theological library is usually constituted of volunteers from the membership, some of whom may be professional librarians elsewhere.

A theological library with *single-tradition* constituency would be mainly identified with a single religious denomination or movement. The educational institution typically offers liberal arts or professional education for members of the denomination as well as specialized training for religious professionals in that tradition. A variation on this pattern occurs when the institution identifies with a religious movement such as Pentecostalism or Evangelicalism rather than with a denomination per se. The users of these libraries are likely to be professors, students of the ministry, alumni, and local clergy. Although the population may be international, the cohesive factor is the common tradition. A Roman Catholic seminary that prepares priests for the church would be one example of the single-

tradition type. Bible colleges and denominational universities are often of this type. Single-tradition institutions may vary in the degree to which their faculty or students are drawn from the tradition. Some single-tradition institutions operate at the graduate level. Many of these institutions in North America are accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. Libraries of this type usually have one or more professional librarians.

A theological library with a *multiple-tradition* constituency operates in an ecumenical educational institution providing graduate education for persons seeking ordination in several traditions. Another example occurs when seminaries or schools of various traditions share a consortial collection representing a variety of faith traditions, each educating its own religious workers and scholars, sometimes on separate campuses near a centralized library. Users of libraries of this type are also likely to be professors, students, alumni, and local clergy. The supporting institutions often seek accreditation from ATS or similar national bodies worldwide. The staff of multiple-tradition libraries are also likely to include one or more professionals.

Finally, a theological library might have an *extra-traditional* context when its sponsoring institution, such as a secular university offering graduate degrees in religious studies, emphasizes the scholarship of religions as human cultural phenomena rather than the preparation of religious adherents for ministerial work. Users of these libraries are professors, students, and scholars worldwide. Such libraries often assemble large international collections in a wide variety of disciplines and media, such as sociology of religion, history, linguistics, anthropology, archaeology, ethics, philosophy, literature, and the arts. These collections concerning the cultural record inform the program in religious studies. In large libraries associated with research universities, there will be many professional librarians, one of whom is designated the religion specialist who selects resources and assists readers with inquiries in religious studies.

In the third place, theological libraries, especially of the single-tradition or multiple-tradition type, participate not only in the information of students, but in their spiritual formation for religious work. The library accomplishes this through an ethos of hospitality, not only in its intellectual openness to collecting a wide variety of points of view, but in the librarians' respect for the students' freedom of inquiry. The library building provides quiet spaces not only for reading but also for contemplation, worship, and prayer. The library often provides spaces for group discussion and events that stimulate it. Exhibits of archives and artifacts call attention to the spiritual heritage of the institution, especially during anniversary or memorial occasions. Like many faculty members in small institutions, librarians may be called on to provide spiritual support to students in moments of intellectual and personal crisis. Since many theological librarians

also hold advanced degrees in a theological discipline, they may also serve on thesis committees or occasionally teach courses.

In the fourth place, theological libraries respond creatively to changes in their religious communities, including technological innovations in information and religious education, changes in religious populations and publishing patterns worldwide, and threats to religious freedom in turbulent political situations. Advances in technology demand that libraries not only keep up with developments in hardware, systems, and metadata, but that they rebalance their acquisitions to supply more electronic resources as their schools shift to online instruction. While denominational populations and related seminary populations in the Northern Hemisphere are diminishing, the global South is experiencing significant denominational growth with consequent demands for theological education and for production of scholarly publications in relevant languages. Theological libraries worldwide collect scholarly materials by and about growing religious communities and find ways to facilitate their institutions' scholarly conversation on a global scale. Theological libraries anchor a global perspective on intellectual freedom that can assist their faculty, students, and institutions to resist the challenges to scholarship and community that economic and political tensions present worldwide. The energy for these efforts comes from hospitality, that powerful engine of respect and appreciation for the value of others' lives and for open dialogue with their perspectives on the divine. Theological libraries host intellectual inquiry because inquiry is an act of faith. They resource, harvest, steward, and disseminate the responses made by scholars, proponents, critics, and students to the claims of their faith traditions. Theological libraries value the accumulated wisdom of the ages, but they remember that a single voice may cry in the wilderness, speak under a tree, or sing in the courts of kings.

Works Cited

Trotti, John B. (2002). "The Theological Library: In Touch With the Witnesses." In *Christian Librarianship: Essays On The Integration of Faith and Profession*, edited by Gregory A. Smith, 48–54. Jefferson, NC: Macfarland. Originally given as an address at the dedication of the Cook Center for Theological Research at Western Theological Seminary and published in *Reformed Review* 35 (Spring 1982): 157–61.

Further Reading

Collections and Periodicals

Graham, M. Patrick, Valerie R. Hotchkiss, and Kenneth E. Row, eds. 1996. *The American Theological Library Association: Essays In Celebration of the First Fifty Years*. Evanston, IL: ATLA.

McMahon, Melody Layton and David R. Stewart, eds. 2006. *A Broadening Conversation: Classic Readings in Theological Librarianship*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Smith, Gregory A., ed. 2002. *Christian Librarianship: Essays On The Integration of Faith and Profession*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Theological Education 40, no. 1 (2004).

Theological Librarianship: An Online Journal of the American Theological Library Association.

Trott, Garrett B. 2019. *The Faithful Librarian: Essays on Christianity in the Profession*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Individual Items

Allison, W. H. 1908-1912. “Theological Libraries.” In *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, edited by Samuel Macauley Jackson, 336–41. New York: Funk & Wagnalls.

Bidlack, Beth. 2006. "Some Observations on Theological Librarianship in Seminary and University Contexts." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 60: 38–48.

Bollier, John A. 2006. “Introduction” to Part 5. In *A Broadening Conversation: Classic Readings in Theological Librarianship*, edited by Melody Layton McMahon and David R. Stewart, 233–6. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Bramah, Michael. 2006. “Introduction” to Part 4. In *A Broadening Conversation: Classic Readings in Theological Librarianship*, edited by Melody Layton McMahon and David R. Stewart, 177–9. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Clarence, Judy. 2004. “ATLA and World Religions.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 58: 80–2.

Clark, J. W. 1968. *Libraries in The Medieval and Renaissance Periods*. The Rede Lecture, 1894. Chicago: Argonaut, Inc.

Coalter, Milton J. 1999. “Remarks Not Previously Given on a Discipline Too Little in Evidence.” *Atla Summary of Proceedings* 53: 112 ff.

Corcoran, Monica. 2006. “Introduction” to Part 2. In *A Broadening Conversation: Classic Readings in Theological Librarianship*, edited by Melody Layton McMahon and David R. Stewart, 55–8. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Crawford, Eileen. 2006. “Introduction” to Part 6. In *A Broadening Conversation: Classic Readings in Theological Librarianship*, edited by Melody Layton McMahon and David R. Stewart, 271–4. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Crow, Paul A. 1966. “Professors and Librarians: Partners in the Oikumené.” In *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 20: 71–6.

Cuninggim, Merrimon. 1954. “The Seminary Library From The Faculty Point of View.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 8: 22 ff.

Daly, Simeon. 1990. “That They All May Be One.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 44: 216 ff.

Dare, Philip N. 1994. “Theological Libraries.” In *Encyclopedia of Library History*, edited by Wayne A. Wiegand and Donald M. David, Jr., 621–3. New York: Garland.

Davis, Donald G., Jr. 2002. “Intellectual Freedom and Evangelical Faith.” In *Christian Librarianship: Essays On The Integration of Faith and Profession*, edited by Gregory A. Smith, 131–8. Jefferson, NC: Mcfarland.

Davis, Donald G., Jr. and John Mark Tucker. 2002. “The Master We Serve: The Call of The Christian Librarian To The Secular Workplace.” In *Christian Librarianship: Essays On The Integration of Faith and Profession*, edited by Gregory A. Smith, 40–7. Jefferson, NC: Mcfarland.

Dempsey, Mary A. 1999. “Serving The Religion Information Needs of The Public.” *Atla Summary of Proceedings* 53: 219 ff.

Dickerson, G. Fay and John A. Peltz. 1974. “The Index to Religious Periodical Literature: Past, Present and Future.” In *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 28: 87 ff.

Doty, Philip, Duane Harbin, and Sandra E. Riggs. 2003. “Theological Librarians as Copyright Leaders.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 57: 63–81.

Dunkly, James. 1991. “Theological Libraries and Theological Librarians in Theological Education.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 45: 227 ff.

———. 1992. “Some Values in Theological Librarianship.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 46: 193 ff.

Ebertz, Susan, Carrie Hackney, and Ann Hotta. 2005. “Encouraging Diversity: Cultural and Ethnic Issues Facing Theological Students of Color as They Use the Library.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 59: 123–41.

Elliott, L. R. 1949. “Seminary Libraries and Theological Education.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 2: C1-C9.

———. 1953. “'Hitherto': Six Years of ATLA.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 7: 1 ff.

Gunn, Shirley, Cindy Lu, Mayra Picos-Lee, D'Anna Shotts, Margaret Tarpley, and Mariel Deluca Voth. 2005. “Cultural Competency in the Theological Library.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 59: 18–26.

Hamm, G. Paul. 1979. “A Look at the Past.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 33: 93 ff.

Jones, Arthur E. 1960. “Some Thoughts on the Joint Theological School–Liberal Arts College Library.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 14: 85 ff.

Kortendick, James J. 1965. “The Theological Librarian: His Commitment and Strategy.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 19: 105 ff.

Krieger, Alan D. 1996. “From the Outside In: A History of Roman Catholic Participation in the ATLA.” In *The American Theological Library Association: Essays In Celebration of The First Fifty Years*, edited by M. Patrick Graham, Valerie R. Hotchkiss, and Kenneth E. Row, 36–42. Evanston, IL: ATLA.

Lincoln, Timothy D. 2004. “What’s a Seminary Library For?” *Theological Education* 40, no. 1: 1-10.

Loyd, Roger L. 2006. “Introduction” to Part 3. In *A Broadening Conversation: Classic Readings in Theological Librarianship*, edited by Melody Layton McMahon and David R. Stewart, 125–8. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

McMahon, Melody Layton. 2010. “Theological Librarianship: An Unapologetic Apology.” *Theological Librarianship* 3, no. 1 (June): 7–14.

———. 2004. “Librarians and Teaching Faculty in Collaboration: New Incentives, New Opportunities.” *Theological Education* 40, no. 1: 73–88.

Morris, Raymond P. 1953. “Theological Librarianship as a Ministry.” *Atla Summary of Proceedings* 7: 31 ff.

Newhall, Janet E. 1954. “The Library Staff Views the Library Program.” *Atla Summary of Proceedings* 8: 22 ff.

O’Brien, Elmer J. and Betty A. O’Brien. 1996. “From Volunteerism to Corporate Professionalism: A Historical Sketch of the American Theological Library Association.” In *The American Theological Library Association: Essays In Celebration of The First Fifty Years,* edited by M. Patrick Graham, Valerie R. Hotchkiss, and Kenneth E. Row, 3–24. Evanston, IL: ATLA.

Pacala, Leon. 1981. “Theological Libraries Revisited.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 35: 1 ff.

Paulus, Michael J, Jr. 2006. “Spiritual Culture and the Theological Library: The Role of the Princeton Theological Seminary Library in the Religious Life of Theological Students in the Nineteenth Century.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 60: 220–8.

Peterson, Herman. 2001. “Theological Librarianship as Ministry.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 55: 231–50.

Roberts, Walter N. 1954. “The Library From The Point of View of The Administration.” In *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 8: 22 ff.

Rockwell, William. 1943–44. “Theological Libraries in the United States.” *Religion In Life* 13: 545–55.

Schreiter, Robert J. 1990. "Globalization and Theological Libraries." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 44: 146–59.

Schrodt, Paul. 1996. "Theological Librarianship and Theological Education." In *The American Theological Library Association: Essays In Celebration of The First Fifty Years*, edited by M. Patrick Graham, Valerie R. Hotchkiss, and Kenneth E. Row, 133–49. Evanston, IL: ATLA.

Schultz, Susan. 1961. "Remarks on Women in Theological Librarianship." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 15: 100 ff.

Selinger, Suzanne. 2004. "ATLA and the Religions of the United States and Canada." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 58: 76–9.

Sherrill, Lewis J. 1948. "Seminary Librarians (Greetings and Challenge From ATS)." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 1: 2 ff.

Skreslet, Paula. 2008. "Basic Primary Sources in Islamic Religion." *Theological Librarianship: An Online Journal of the American Theological Library Association* 1, no. 1 (3 June).

Smalley, Martha Lund and Paul F. Stuehrenberg. 2004. "Incorporating Global Perspectives into Theological Education: The Role of the Library." *Theological Education* 40, no. 1: 59–72.

Stewart, David R. 2000. "Libraries, Western Christian." In *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, edited by Wm. M. Johnston, 235–6. Vol. 1. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn.

Stokes, Roy. 1993. "Shadow and Substance." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 47: 196 ff.

Stuehrenberg, Paul F. 2005. "Presidential Address: Who Will Advocate for the Theological Library?" *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 59: 29–32.

Tait, Jennifer Woodruff. 2004. "True and Capable Heirs: A Survey of Resources on the African Methodist Episcopal Church." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 58: 183–95.

Tarpley, Margaret, Shirley Gunn, and D'Anna Shotts. 2004. "International, Cultural, and Ethnic Issues for Theological Librarians." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 58: 168–73.

Tarpley, Margaret. 2008. "The U.S. as a Foreign Culture: Helping International Students, Faculty, and Staff Navigate the American Cultural Landscape." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 62: 324–8.

Taylor, Sharon. 2002. "Power and Responsibility: Reflections on Theological Librarianship." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 56: 51 ff.

Treat, James. 2004. "Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era." *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 58: 41–9.

Trotti, John B. 2002. “The Theological Library: In Touch With the Witnesses.” In *Christian Librarianship: Essays On The Integration of Faith and Profession*, edited by Gregory A. Smith, 48–54. Jefferson, NC: Macfarland.

Uhrich, Helen B. 1957. “The Community of Learning.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 11: 1–6.

Weigel, Gustave. 1961. “When Catholic and Protestant Theologies Meet.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 15: 60 ff.

Welch, Claude. 1987. “The Theological Library: Servant or Partner.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 41: 156 ff.

White, Ernest. 1986. “A Combined Greeting to ATLA Number 40 and Reflection on ATLA Number 1.” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 40: 172 ff.

Womack, Anne Richardson. 2006. “Introduction” to Part 1. In *A Broadening Conversation: Classic Readings in Theological Librarianship*, edited Melody Layton McMahon and David R. Stewart, 3-6. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.