CHAPTER 6

Theological Libraries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

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Introduction

Theological education and, with it, theological libraries on the territory of the former Soviet Union have experienced quite a varied history. This chapter will briefly present some of their beginnings and then attempt to describe the current state of theological libraries in the successor states. Usually, theological libraries in this part of the world, due to the Soviet heritage and the never-ending transitionary period, are relatively small and ill-resourced. Still, they are very aware of their calling to serve educational programs in theology and religion and strive to meet this challenge as best as they can. There are very few sources that deal with theological libraries in this region, and so the presentation will be sketchy at best. Many issues have been gleaned from personal interactions, which also leaves certain gaps in the overview as possibly not all important players have been recognized or contacted.

The presentation will proceed through five geographical regions, which comprise countries with a more or less similar cultural, religious, and educational background: 1) Russia and Belarus, 2) Ukraine, 3) Moldova, 4) Caucasus states (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), and 5) Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan). Such categorization also has its limitations and will lead to generalizations, which will hopefully not mar or distort the presentation of individual contextual situations. Where libraries of university faculties and/or national libraries comprise significant holdings relevant for theological studies and where these provide services for users of

theological libraries they will also be included in the discussion. A summary of challenges that are common to theological libraries in this geographical region will conclude the presentation.

The Russian Federation and Belarus

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, and after a short period of attempts at liberal democracy, institutions in both countries are exhibiting authoritarian tendencies. This has consequences for the practice of religion and for theological educational institutions, in terms of directives and regulations which the state imposes on their operations.[1] Libraries, including theological libraries, are also directly affected. For some time now, libraries in these countries have had to watch a blacklist of titles[2] that these governments consider dangerous and not permissible for circulation to patrons. So libraries have to restrict access, create special secure storage for these titles, or take them out of their holdings completely. Sometimes the reasons why these titles became blacklisted are not very obvious or reasoned. Usually, it is the attempt of the government to shield off radicalization of any kind or to impose top-down certain ethicist views or understandings of society. It is part of a larger set of activities to control public opinion and censor out the influence of unwelcome opinions. A climate of fear is created as librarians have to continuously watch the lists and are always in danger of jeopardizing their and their institutions' existence.

At the same time, there are also interesting developments in the academic world. After being carried out exclusively in the network of church seminaries and separated from the public university system, theology has received in 2015 the status of an accepted scientific discipline on public universities and theological education is now incorporated in the Russian state university system. At the moment, there are only curricula for studies in Orthodox, Islamic, and Buddhist theology. Christian theology, then, in the current legislation, is understood as Russian Orthodox theology, which severely limits Catholics, Lutherans, and the different Protestant denominations in teaching their confessional theology. At the time of writing, attempts are underway to develop curricula for Lutheran and other Protestant confessions.

The predominance of the Russian Orthodox Church has been obvious throughout previous centuries. This church first developed monasteries, which created and copied books, and seminaries as well as academies for priest training, which also had their own libraries. The libraries of the flagship academies in the Russian Empire just before the 1917 Revolution are cited to have had as many as 150,000 volumes and 4,116 manuscripts at the St. Petersburg Orthodox Academy

and over 100,000 unique titles at the Moscow Orthodox Academy. The holdings comprised not only church and theological literature, but also significant collections in other disciplines, including *belles lettres* (fine literature, fiction). Most of it was confiscated during the Bolshevik Revolution, and only selective parts were returned when the academies were again able to restore their operations after the Second World War.

In Belarus, in Minsk, an Orthodox seminary was founded in 1785 and an Orthodox academy only in 1996, with the permission of Patriarch Alexiy II of Moscow. The library of the Orthodox Academy in Minsk has holdings of about 60,000 volumes, 7,000 of which are periodicals, and includes many unique manuscripts starting from the 16th century. The National Library of Belarus also has extensive theological holdings and maintains some historico-cultural religious interest by curating, for example, an exhibition on the Bible, or in January 2016 on Francysk Skaryna as Bible printer, or the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Orthodox theology is also taught at various other universities in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, and other cities. Holdings in theology are, in these cases, part of other disciplinary libraries, such as in history, philosophy, linguistics, or sociology, and don't receive much care or development.

The Roman Catholic Church has always been a minority in Russia, but from 1842 it was able to operate a seminary in St. Petersburg. The extensive library holdings were distributed to other cultural institutions in 1918 when the seminary had to stop its operations. It has been functioning again since 1993 and the library has grown to about 25,000 volumes, half of which is in Russian and the rest in languages such as English, German, French, Italian, Polish, and Latin.

Lutherans, many of non-Russian descent, had an easier plight than Catholics in the Russian Empire and so, at the time of the 1917 Revolution, there were over 3.5 million members. They usually benefited from pastoral training in the Baltics or Germany, and a seminary functioned in St. Petersburg only between 1925 and 1929. Since Perestroika, four small seminaries have been started in Russia. Two are close to St. Petersburg: the library of the seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria has about 14,000 volumes, and the library in Novo-Saratovka, the successor of the 1925 Lutheran seminary, about 5000–7000 volumes. There are also two seminaries in Siberia, one in Krasnoyarsk and one in Novosibirsk; these two are also responsible for training Lutheran pastors for the Central Asian states (see below). Their libraries are around 5,000 volumes, with books in Russian, German, and English.

In 1988 in Zaoksk, the Adventists were the first non-Orthodox denomination after Perestroika to establish a theological seminary, where they also quickly

Image 1: The library of the St. Petersburg Christian University. © St. Petersburg Christian University

developed an extensive theological library of currently well over 70,000 volumes and just under 10,000 periodicals.

Many theological schools and libraries of other Protestant denominations also came into existence after Perestroika. Some, however, had already successfully operated right after the 1917 Revolution. A flourishing school in St. Petersburg by evangelical Christians and Baptists with minimal library holdings was closed in 1929. Then, in the sixties, the Baptists started a distance education program with no library but reading materials being mailed to students. The beginnings of libraries of Protestant residential theological schools in the early nineties were quite humble, usually just one shelf with whatever theological literature could be scraped together.

Currently, the largest evangelical library is found at the multi-denominational St. Petersburg Christian University (about 28,500 volumes), followed by the Kuban Christian University (about 22,000 volumes), and Moscow Baptist seminary (some 19,000 volumes). There are several other seminaries in Moscow, Bryansk, Omsk, Novosibirsk, Vladivostok. Many of them currently experience significant problems in maintaining their operations after the Russian Ministry of Education's audit in 2018. Several schools, sometimes upon reasoned and often upon implausible allegations, were given high fines and their educational processes were curtailed in different ways. This has increased the atmosphere of fear and unpredictability.

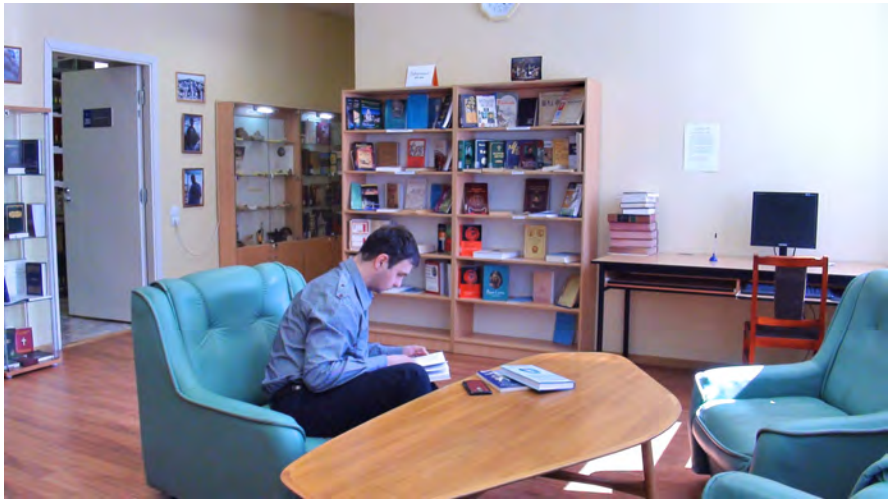

Image 2: Reading area at the Library of the St. Petersburg Christian University. © St. Petersburg Christian University

In Belarus, Protestant theological schools are primarily found in the capital Minsk: a Baptist seminary with a library of 12,500 volumes and a Pentecostal seminary; their holdings are around 15,000 volumes.

Ukraine

The history of Orthodox ecclesiastical and theological libraries in Ukraine goes back as far as the 11th century to the Yaroslav library at St. Sophia's Cathedral in Kiev. The Metropolitan Peter Mohyla also greatly contributed to the development of theological schools, book publishing, and ecclesiastical libraries. The library of the Orthodox Kiev Theological Academy, one of the successor schools of the Mohyla Collegium, just before the 1917 communist revolution held around 100,000 volumes and just under 1,000 manuscripts, many of them unique. During communist rule, library holdings came under the jurisdiction of the Vernadsky National Library, and so even today parts of the KTA pre-revolutionary collection are found there. The academy and its library were reopened in 1989 and now serve their own faculty and students with their rich holdings, but also external users.

Image 3: Librarian at the Kiev Orthodox Academy and Seminary consulting future priests. © Kiev Orthodox Academy and Seminary

As Ukraine always was a spiritually alert area with high numbers of Christians in all denominations, the current scene of theological libraries in Ukraine is much more denominationally diverse.[3] The second-largest religious community, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church, established formal theological training in 1783. In 1929, the Seminary was transformed into the Greek Catholic Theological Academy. This also marked the beginnings of the library of the Ukrainian Catholic University, its current successor and flagship institution. During the Second World War much of this library was destroyed and so, in 1995, with help from Rome and other places, a new beginning was necessary. The library today holds 146,000 book titles (not all are theological, as the university offers programs in various disciplines), 2,600 periodicals, and several special collections. Besides the University, there are several Greek Catholic theological seminaries, mainly in western Ukraine, with small theological libraries to support priest training. The Roman Catholics have four times fewer members and their own small seminaries with minimal libraries.

Ukrainian Adventists first relied on the Academy in Zaoksk, Russia (see above) for theology training, but then established their own Christian Humanitarian Institute on the outskirts of Kiev with a theological faculty and theology holdings

in the library. Master's-level studies are offered in cooperation with Andrews University in the USA. While the total library holdings are around 45,000, the theological collection comes to about 20,000. The other post-Soviet states rely on the Russian and Ukrainian Adventist institutions for training and have no seminaries or libraries of their own.

The Ukrainian Lutherans adhere to two unions: one associated with German Lutherans (they train their pastors in St. Petersburg or Germany) and one Ukrainian. The Ukrainian Lutheran Church had founded a seminary in Ternopil in 1994. It wasn't possible to find information about the seminary library.

After Perestroika, many Protestant and evangelical schools mushroomed in Ukraine. The numbers have gone down somewhat throughout the last years, due to a lack of students and resources. Together with theological schools of the fifteen successor states, evangelical schools founded the Eurasian Accrediting Association (EAAA) in 1992/3, which has the goal to support quality assurance in theological education, foster research and the development of native theology and resources, and provide consultancy. EAAA also invests in library development with highlights such as a librarians' conference in Moscow in 2008, conducted by the author, followed by meetings in 2018 and 2019. A digital library of primarily Russian, Ukrainian, and some English titles was created in 2008–2009 for use by the more than 50 member schools. Individuals–for example, pastors and other church ministers–are also eligible to receive access to the 6,000+ holdings. Due to a common educational and contextual background, the Association is able to strengthen and benefit the usually small to medium-size libraries in different post-Soviet countries. However, legislation in the post-Soviet countries develops in different directions and issues that libraries face locally begin to differ. The language issue and the five years of war between Russia and Ukraine are also affecting relationships and cooperation initiatives (see below).

In the wake of the war, the largest Ukrainian Protestant library at the Donetsk Christian University (with about 40,000 volumes) was destroyed in 2014. Other mid-size theological libraries are found in Kiev (Kiev Theological Seminary, about 31,500 volumes; Evangel Theological Seminary, about 30,000 volumes; Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary, about 25,000 volumes), Odessa (Odessa Theological Seminary, about 23,500 volumes), Kherson (Tavriski Christian Institute, about 26,000 volumes), Lviv (Lviv Theological Seminary, 14,500 volumes), Zaporozhye (Zaporozhye Bible Seminary, 15,000 volumes).

The Ukrainian government so far encourages and fosters education in theology, having already in 2010 created the legal basis for university studies in this discipline up to a doctorate. Many universities offer theology programs, which, however, doesn't mean that sufficient attention is given to the development of library holdings in this area. Programs are added while budgets

Image 4: The library of Divitia Gratiae University. © Universitatea Divitia Gratiae

are cut, university librarians don't have expertise in the subject and literature of theology, and often "old school" librarian thinking prevails (that is, emphasis on custodianship and storage wins out over a focus on service, user needs, new technologies; see Haigh 2009).

Moldova

Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe, riddled by corruption, unstable governments, and very high work emigration. Its population is torn between adherence to Romania (pro-Western wing) and Russia (pro-communist wing), and so educational institutions and libraries, including theological, operate in and combine both languages–Romanian and Russian.

The Orthodox Church trains its clergy at the Academy of Orthodox Theology in Chișinău, started in 1926 and reopened again in 1991. The Academy has an extensive collection, including the archives of the Moldovan Orthodox Church, but it wasn't possible to locate an online catalog of their holdings. The website of

the Academy, instead of a link to the catalog, includes links to full-text writings by or about church fathers and saints.

A significant theological library of 24,000 volumes can be found at the Protestant Universitatea Divitia Gratiae. The library is located in a recently constructed building, with expansive study space and great potential for development; its holdings are in Russian, Romanian, and English and can be searched in a Koha-powered OPAC.

Georgia and Armenia

Both countries are neighbors in the Caucasus region and have some similarities but also clear distinctions. The majority of the population is Orthodox (Armenian Apostolic or Georgian Apostolic respectively), with small minorities of Catholic, Lutheran, and evangelical communities.

The Tbilisi Orthodox Academy was founded in 1988, based on a seminary with a long and difficult history. Today the institution also offers doctoral degrees in Orthodox theology. The library, with holdings of over 5,000 items, has an OpenBiblio OPAC at *http://tsas.ge/bib/opac/index.php*. Several Orthodox and state universities also offer theological studies and have holdings in theology.

Catholics, with a small community of about 10,000 members, after several attempts (see Slantcheva and Levy 2007, 83) were able in 1994 to establish the Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Institute of Philosophy, Theology, History, and Culture in Tbilisi, which in 2002 became the Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani University. Besides humanities and law, it still maintains an ecumenical theology faculty. Its library holdings–mainly in Georgian, Russian, German, and English–come to almost 20,000 items in all disciplines, including theology. The library has an OpenBiblio OPAC at *http://lib.sabauni.edu.ge/opac/index.php* as well as subscriptions to EBSCO and HeinOnline (law).

Protestant training institutions seem to exist more like satellite campuses of theological institutions from other post-Soviet countries. They usually operate in church buildings with very small or no physical libraries. PDF files of titles for required reading are shared or, otherwise, students are directed to purchase their own copies, or else visit the EAAA online library or libraries of local universities.

The Armenian Apostolic Church has operated the Vaskenian Theological Academy since 1990, in close connection with the Gevorkian Theological Seminary. According to the website, the Academy library has approximately 21,000 items in Armenian, English, Russian, and French; no library OPAC was found. The Gevorkian seminary has links to PDFs and audiobooks. Both

institutions have close links, including in educational and study resources matters, with Armenian institutions abroad, such as in the USA.

A Baptist seminary has been in existence in Yerevan since the mid-nineties with a library of about 5,000 titles.

Central Asian "-stan" Countries

Five former Soviet republics–Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan–have functioned as independent states now for over 25 years and are similar in their predominantly Islamic context and continuous dependence on other powers in the region, such as Russia, the USA, and various Middle Eastern states. Because Azerbaijan displays many similar aspects in history, Islamic context, and geopolitical power plays, it will also be included in this section even though, geographically, it belongs to the Caucasus region.

While all these countries have a rich cultural and diverse religious heritage, their libraries didn't have much chance to survive for long periods; each successive conquest and, finally, the annexation to the Russian Empire, destroyed or stole the legacy of the previous civilization (Kudryatova 2003). The Russian Empire created libraries for the Russian-speaking population to instill the Orthodox faith and to accelerate the cultural integration of the indigenous population into the Empire.

Christian denominations in all Central Asian states are quite small due to the predominantly Islamic context and restrictive laws that regulate their operations. The Orthodox Church is part of the Russian Orthodox Church and so dependent on the center in Moscow. There are two Orthodox seminaries: in Almaty (founded in 2010) and in Tashkent (founded in 1998), with about 10–15 students each. They also train priests for parishes in other states. No information was found on library holdings, except a list of links on the Almaty seminary site to electronic versions of required reading titles.

The Roman Catholic seminary in Karaganda, Kazakhstan has about 11–12 students and has served all Central Asia since 1998. It was organized with much help from the Vatican and Catholic missionaries from various countries (before that, priest training for Central Asia took place in the Baltic countries or in St. Petersburg). No information on the library was found.

The evangelical denominations, locally called Protestants, are quite diverse; there are large congregations but also house churches, the communities are ethnically mixed or comprise only nationals. Each tradition tends to have its own training institution. Larger theological schools with physical libraries exist in Almaty (Almaty Bible Institute, with a library of about 15,000 volumes) and in

Image 5: The library of the Almaty Bible Institute in Kazakhstan. © Almaty Bible Institute

Bishkek (United Theological Seminary with about 12,000 volumes; Baptist Bible Institute with about 5,000 volumes). Many training initiatives function 'under the radar' as underground seminaries, some are satellite campuses of theological schools from other post-Soviet countries, most use 'less visible' electronic resources instead of a physical library.

Even if a Central Asian theological school provides ministry education, it doesn't go higher than a diploma or bachelor's level; after that, students seek out studies abroad. But even bachelor's studies cannot be sufficiently served with literature in the local language because of low publication and translation output. Theological libraries usually predominantly contain Russian and English holdings with 1–5% native language materials (often translated). They have to carefully watch blacklists of books prohibited by the government so as to not make them available to the public (see Artemyev 2012). The laws on religion and extremism often follow or are similar to Russian laws.

Library Education

There are no opportunities in post-Soviet countries to receive specific education in theological librarianship. Most of the librarians employed in theological libraries have no professional librarianship education; according to a non-representative survey, in 2017 only about 35% had completed courses for either a library technician degree or a 4-year course for a librarian degree (in state-owned institutions, the number of librarians with professional education is around 60%, see Kouznetsova 2015, 33). The path to librarianship for these persons often includes some way of being connected to a theological school–either as an alumnus/alumna, secretary, academic administrator–and being noticed as having managerial skills, some interest in libraries, and some insight into and understanding of theological literature. Such people are then assigned the duties of running the library, usually in addition to the job they are already doing. Often it is a transitory role because, depending on the direction in which they develop, after some time they may become faculty (pedagogical skills) or academic deans (administrative skills), or move on to completely new areas. If they remain in the field, the question of professional training and development is raised, but it is not easy to solve it while the person is already on the job.

Some have taken courses in librarianship at state universities and were disappointed because of the Soviet ideological leftovers, "old school" library thinking, lack of exposure to new technologies, and because, even though they had received a degree, they still weren't sufficiently prepared for the day-to-day operations of a theological library (Haigh 2009).[4] The Institute of Culture and Arts of the Tomsk State University in Siberia offers a subject, "Orthodox libraries" (Kuzoro 2015), as part of its LIS bachelor's program–a very interesting and useful piece for those who run Orthodox church and seminary libraries. However, it cannot be taken at a distance or online and so remains inaccessible to most of its target group. Read Ministries have supported a two-year program for church librarians in Kremenchug, Ukraine and in Minsk, Belarus, and some theological librarians have graduated from this training. It combines an introduction to the Bible and theology and an introduction to cataloging (Dewey) and other library operations.

State universities and colleges of the post-Soviet states, including programs in librarianship education, are still in the process of many reforms: they transitioned to the Bologna system (three-staged education: bachelor's, master's, doctoral education) around 2003–2005 and have introduced many new initiatives, including competencies-based education and assessment. The first cohort of bachelor's degree holders from the newly designed LIS programs graduated in Russia as recent as 2015, and a few years later in the other successor states

(Klyuev 2015). State universities also offer LIS continuous education programs but, unfortunately, they suffer from financial and personnel shortages and very few can be taken at a distance or online (Kouznetsova 2015, 36).

Much depends, then, on the initiative and enthusiasm of the individual theological librarian to find ways to read up in the discipline,[5] to seek out seminars on relevant topics offered by national libraries (for example, training on cataloging in MARC or authority control), and to follow the work of professional library associations and activities/conferences which they may be offering. The Eurasian Accrediting Association, which comprises primarily evangelical schools, has been running several conferences for librarians' training (EAAA 2019).

Common Challenges

As mentioned above, 28 years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, its successor states develop in divergent directions but libraries, including theological libraries, still face similar problems due to a common history, a far-too-long transitional period with continuous economic struggles, and a partial return to authoritarian tendencies.

Scatteredness of Resources

The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 brought much devastation to libraries of every Christian denomination. Holdings were confiscated and distributed to state libraries and museums or just left to rot. State libraries were not always sure what to do with them: to re-classify and offer them for circulation could cause state sanctions because such holdings were considered dangerous and anti-Soviet; to neglect them would mean to destroy state property. When Stalin in 1943 permitted a re-opening of theological training institutions, Orthodox libraries started to fight for the return of their holdings. At times this was possible, but none were able to regain everything, for various reasons. Many manuscripts and special collections have remained in state libraries. Even if many individual titles were returned to libraries (if they were able to prove ownership before the Revolution!), the coherence and comprehensiveness of the collection were lost. Many reprints of the pre-revolutionary theological scholarship have been produced since the early nineties.

Researchers need to be aware of this history and that materials are haphazardly scattered in various places; much serendipity and fortuitous accidental findings are involved in getting a full overview of a topic. Libraries of theological schools, therefore, usually try to arrange access for their students to the adjacent university and national libraries so as to expand opportunities for

access to theological literature. The National Library is expected to hold a copy of each book, including theological books, published in the respective country, even though not all national libraries are equally efficient in this. Many libraries still have closed stacks and smaller libraries especially don't have electronic catalogs that can be accessed through the internet, so often several physical visits to the library become necessary to fully explore the collection.

Cooperation Initiatives

Even though many ecclesiastical and theological libraries have been started or revived during the last 28 years in the post-Soviet successor countries, there are still limited interconnections between them, inside the same country and across borders, or even inside the same denomination. Cooperation–as, for example, in interlibrary loan, duplicates exchange, document delivery–is often possible only on an informal level, on the basis of personal relationships and trust. This mirrors the state of things in public and university libraries where the old Soviet infrastructures have catastrophically broken down and new lines of cooperation are being established only very slowly. The countries increasingly develop in different directions and Russian as *lingua franca* partly functions for many librarians but also rapidly loses its uniting influence.

Cooperation initiatives usually follow denominational lines and heavily depend on enthusiasts who are able to engage like-minded kindred spirits to invest time and resources into a project. Some small libraries help each other by creating a union catalog. For example, in Minsk, Belarus, five Orthodox libraries, among them the library of the Minsk Orthodox Seminary, run a common catalog (*http://178.124.157.158:8088*). The same seems to be true of the Orthodox library in the Moscow region, which met in March 2019 to discuss various venues for cooperation (Russian Orthodox Church 2019). Greek Catholic libraries in Ukraine are attempting to create a network under the leadership of UCU (the network may or may not go across denominational lines).

The Eurasian Accrediting Association, comprised of about 50 evangelical theological schools, offers support for its member libraries to migrate to the open-source ILS Koha so that they can display their holdings in an OPAC and share bibliographic records through Z39.50. At the same time, the development of a union catalog based on Koha is being discussed. A union catalog of periodicals that member libraries hold is also underway. The EAAA digital library, after ten years of successful operation, needs a thorough overhaul and so plans are underway to migrate to a new platform, expand holdings, and, at the same time, create a D-Space repository with the possibility for member schools to display their theses/dissertations as well as faculty publications. A network of librarians from EAAA schools and, partly, Orthodox seminaries creates venues for

Image 6: The meeting of Eastern European theological librarians in 2019 in Kiev organized by EEAA. © EEAA

cooperation with running an annual conference, training sessions for Koha, maintaining a discussion list on social media (Viber and Facebook), and some informal resources exchange.

Collection Development

There is no real infrastructure to follow theological publications' output, even if one should have a budget to acquire them. Many ecclesiastical publishers, even if they produce serious and useful content, get by without ISBNs, strategic marketing, or effective distribution structures (the latter, however, works only if they are subsidized!). This makes it difficult for libraries to discover and collect such materials. Collection development means following several identified publishers on various social media, maintaining personal contact with the publication house director to find out timely hints, and visiting websites of publishers and internet shops. Periodical publications, difficult to trace in any country and system, add even more challenges.

Collections, especially of Catholic, Lutheran, and Evangelical theological schools, often have large numbers of titles in languages other than the national

language, usually English. They are primarily used by faculty because about half to two-thirds of the students do not have sufficient reading and comprehension abilities in English. Publishing cannot supply enough titles in the native language to serve curriculum needs for the different levels of theological training. Librarians need to have at least basic skills in foreign languages to be able to properly catalog the titles or engage in copy cataloging.

Classification Systems and Cataloging Formats

Collection development and management are complicated by the fact that the existing and widely used classification systems are not useful for theological libraries. The predominant classification system used by state and national libraries and often imprinted on new publications–the Library-Bibliographical Classifications (BBK)–is a leftover from Soviet times (created at the end of the fifties) and therefore ideologically biased in the areas of religion, philosophy, and history. UDC (Universal Decimal Classification) is more often used in technical and medical libraries, and so its Russian version does not provide a sufficiently detailed breakdown for religious and theological materials, plus, having been developed in the West, it displays a bias toward the Western church. The 21st edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification was translated and published in Russian in 2000. This was done by the Russian National Library in order to help librarians navigate OCLC, the Library of Congress, and other libraries in the world. Many theological libraries in post-Soviet countries have adopted it as their classification system. Because the project has been abandoned and no further translations are being made, they are stuck with the 21st edition if they don't know English. Recent DDC editions in English, however, are being produced electronically and require a subscription, which is often unaffordable for libraries. So, libraries sometimes develop their own classification systems or non-standardized, "creative" adaptations of existing ones. This is not conducive for effective search across libraries and also not for cooperative efforts.

Most post-Soviet countries, having been exposed to IFLA's activities after Perestroika, adopted UniMARC as the official cataloging format, with some slight variations in each country (like RusMARC, UkrMARC, BelMARC, etc.). Nevertheless, there are enough leading university and public libraries who–because of software incompatibilities, ignorance, preferences of target libraries in copy cataloging, and possibilities for access to Z39.50 servers–use MARC21(!). Theological librarians, often running their library without professional education, are sometimes not aware of, or are mystified by, the differences in the formats and, accordingly, are confused when copy cataloging doesn't work or when they are told that their bibliographic records don't follow "the standards."

As in theological libraries all over the world, authority control, especially of subject terms/headings, is a recurring issue difficult to solve. The Russian National Library, still leading among the other states, has recently published guidelines for the creation of authority records; these still need to be discussed and approved. There is no infrastructure yet for downloading authority records. And while this would be of great help at least for author records, theological subject terms would need to be created from scratch anyway by theological librarians. So, a multilingual theological thesaurus seems very useful but doesn't yet exist.

Institutional Issues

Theological libraries receive little prominence in their institutions partly because the focus in education, in state schools but also in denominational institutions, is still mainly on (top-down) lecturing, memorization, and retelling in oral exams rather than on self-directed learning. This can be explained as leftovers from the communist past (where propaganda and education were intertwined and contents were defined centrally and top-down) or as leftovers from modernism (universal truth can be discovered, defined, and taught using directive techniques). Possibly there are also cultural influences with the prevalence in this region of a communal and hierarchical approach rather than a focus on the individual.

The scarce financial base of theological schools in a continuously unpredictable economic context is also a strong reason for library budget cuts. When all departments fight for the money pot, the library is usually disadvantaged because it is not perceived as producing income, because of little advocacy and lobbying from librarians, possibly because of an increasing mentality that libraries offer outdated resources and services and should rather engage in the digitization of required reading titles. The low salaries of theological librarians are concerning, as are the expectation that they combine librarianship with other duties (often secretarial or in academic administration) and the lack of professional education for librarians and lack of strategies for professional development. However, lack of positive change in theological libraries in responding to the current relevant needs of students and faculty will continue to lead to a further disintegration of the libraries' image and perception of usefulness, which will cause another round of library budget cuts.

Because of dissatisfaction with libraries or because users are not aware of library services or are not comfortable with them, faculty and students, like theologians often do, focus on developing their personal print and digital libraries. Each will have collected from the internet, friends, and other sources

huge scores of electronic files for educational and ministry purposes, usually in Russian and English.

Print-Digital Divide and User Training

Theological libraries, not having yet solved the many issues from the past, need to cope with extremely fast developments in technology and to envision effective ways of managing hybrid collections. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of ecclesiastical and theological libraries don't even have an electronic catalog of their holdings and are also rarely featured on the website of the institution. Librarians usually don't have web design skills, and the overworked, often volunteering IT specialist of the institution has no time for this 'less important' component of the school.

The libraries' primary users are millennials who grew up with technology, are affected by globalization, and believe they know all about technology and searching. With their high expectations and an attitude that everything can be found (and, if not, then it needs to be created) in digital form, they are either turned off by libraries or have library anxiety because they don't quite get the specifics of library operations. Students usually arrive with little experience of library use (because public and school libraries are also in poor shape), and so user training and information literacy skills development needs to receive much more attention. However, teaching modes in theological schools (most now give up residential training in favor of distance, online, on-off campus programs) and course assignments don't foster intensive interaction with the library. Librarians are often passive or have no time to creatively reach out to students, design attractive online tutorials, engage in online reference chats, or otherwise help deal with access to quality theological information.

The switch to distance and online education has added challenges for theological libraries to offer digital resources for remote access, so sometimes websites of smaller institutions, instead of references to the physical library and its (non-existent?) OPAC, display a collection of links to PDF copies of key resources. Sometimes the collection and/or creation of electronic resources (for example, in the framework of a learning management system) is found on the job description of the coordinator for distance education and the library is not even included or consulted in the process.

Conclusion

Theological libraries in post-Soviet countries have gone through the same ups and downs as the seminaries and theological faculties whom they serve. The

seventy years of communist and atheist destruction have left their unmistakable legacy that is still felt in subtle and heavy ways. The far-too-long transitional period and continuous economic challenges without much hope for a better future have worn schools and libraries out. Nevertheless, there are many encouraging initiatives, not least in the area of cooperation between libraries, that strive to enable and empower theological librarians to provide the resources and services their parent institutions need in the changing educational process. While many factors need to work together in order to overcome the aforementioned challenges, at the center of change will need to be the librarians themselves who, with a renewed vision and strength, utilize the knowledge and experience of their colleagues worldwide (especially from theological libraries of the majority world), follow and benefit from the developments of librarianship in their own country, and develop new, contextual approaches that respond to the needs in their institutions.

Notes

1. The Belarusian president Lukashenko once proclaimed himself to be an "Orthodox atheist." For him and for policies in Belarus, this means that religion is instrumentalized for the sake of politics. The Orthodox Church is privileged as part of the cultural heritage, and theological training institutions (of all denominations) are permitted to function as long as they remain inside limits tightly defined by him as president.
2. See, for example, the list of the Justice Department of the Russian Federation at *https://minjust.ru/ru/extremist-materials?field_extremist_content* with about 5,000 titles, as well as the evaluation by Frolov (2012). Writings produced by Jehovah's Witnesses were added to the list recently.
3. According to Elensky (2012), such religious diversity and the lack of a strict link between nation and only one denomination is conducive to a high level of religious tolerance. This made possible less restrictive laws for theological education and libraries.
4. Haigh describes in detail the ideological infiltration of library education before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the attempts of Ukraine to develop a new approach. She also mentions the unpreparedness for library realities after graduation because of how librarianship training is designed and the mismatch between claims and aspirations of university training and what a user then finds in actual daily library processes.

5. The 'Open Science' electronic library at https://cyberleninka.ru, other electronic libraries such as https://rucont.ru/rubric/9, and larger librarianship journals offer archival and often also current pieces for professional reading.

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