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Hannie Riley and Jussi Hyvärinen

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## Editors

Jussi Hyvärinen and Hannie Riley

In September 2022, BETH celebrated its 50th anniversary in Rolduc, the Netherlands. Having been the cooperative organisation of European theological libraries for five decades was something to celebrate. The jubilee seminar was held in the historic monastic milieu of Rolduc Abbey, where attendees heard many interesting presentations about the future of theological libraries and theological librarianship. At the General Meeting, members accepted a proposal to publish a new BETH Yearbook which would include, among other topics, articles based on the presentations delivered at the conference. We two Board members – Jussi Hyvärinen and Hannie Riley – were elected editors. Since the word ‘yearbook’ sounds perhaps unnecessarily staid and official, the board later decided to call this publication the ‘BETH Bulletin’.

The core of the Bulletin is therefore articles which have been written following presentations given at Rolduc Abbey, and heard by those celebrating the anniversary with us then. These articles share perspectives on the future of theological libraries, the librarian’s work at the era of electronic publishing, and other open access-related issues. In addition to expanding on and reporting member libraries’ presentations made at the 2022 conference, this publication includes art, poetry, and also a short story. We thank everyone who has been willing to share their words and images with the whole community.

In this preface, we must also thank the outgoing President and Vice-President. Geert Harmanny, who has led BETH for the past five years, has been a skilled organiser and networker. Vice-President Matti Myllykoski has been an open-minded debater rich in ideas, whose education as a researcher in theology has brought new perspectives to the board’s work. At the same time, we wish the new Chairman, Hanne Storm Ofteland, and the Vice-Chairman, Stefano Malaspina, the very best in the tasks which await them during their tenure at the helm of BETH.

Finally, we also wish to thank UB Tübingen, which has kindly agreed to host this digitally published open access publication. We hope that both members and non-members alike enjoy what we have pulled together to represent this last year as an organisation, and we look forward to seeing another Bulletin next year – as well as the next jubilee!

## Incoming From the Newly Arriving President

**Hanne Storm Ofteland**

Chief Librarian, Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, Oslo, Norway

As Chief Librarian at MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, I am very interested in collaborating with other theological libraries, both on a national and an international level. Those interested in hearing more about my particular workplace are welcome to read my conference paper, 'Looking into the crystal ball,' which I presented, together with my colleague Senior Librarian Rune Keisuke Kosaka, in Rolduc last autumn. Hence I will not give further background here. Instead, let me use this space to give a brief introduction to myself and my presidency.



I am still quite new to the field of theological librarianship, having worked in the arts sector for most of my career – in museums, archives, but first and foremost in higher education libraries. Cultural heritage and art are among my main interests, being an art historian by training, in addition to librarianship.

For those of us working in academic libraries, I think it is important to stay up-to-date with technological developments. This is challenging, but also something that provides great opportunities for our sector: enabling dissemination of

knowledge and research, both to our primary patrons as well as to an interested broader audience. With the requirements on the HE sector when it comes to the implementation of open science and the FAIR principles, my small team of librarians and I already spend a considerable amount of our worktime on questions related to open access publishing, data storage, licenses, right retention strategies, and so on.

I have a keen interest in library management and the development of library services. Strategic planning and connecting the Library to our institution's main goals and plans are extremely important. It is essential that we focus on doing the right things, allocating our resources to where they are best spent and most needed. When it comes to our students, this means further development of our information literacy classes, embedded librarianship, and opening up the library space for their uses. Our academic staff need support, both as teachers and researchers. The Library should and must be a natural partner to cooperate with within the wider organisation.

In Norway there are no church or monastery libraries, and the few precious collections of antiquarian books are either in the collections of small private secondary schools ("katedralskoler"), or the National Library/National Archives. Learning more about the work with these types of collections and libraries in our European community is something I am really looking forward to: be it preservation, conservation, their catalogues, or different ongoing digitisation projects.

The library sector has always been very cooperative, and willing to support, share, and learn from each other. Long may this continue. I hope that my knowledge and experience as a librarian and library leader for almost 30 years will be useful in my work as a member and President of the BETH Board. I look very much forward to having fruitful discussions with all the members of the association, to learning more about their activities, and to partaking in the development of shared BETH projects.

# Outgoing

## From the Departing Vice-President

### Personal Reflections on BETH

**Rev. DR Datti Myllykoski**

Leading Information Specialist, Helsinki University, Finland

My first BETH meeting was in Nice, back in 2010. My institution, the Theology Library at the University of Helsinki, had joined BETH but soon after that it ceased to exist, becoming part of the central Helsinki University Library. Since 2012, my new job in the brand-new Kaisa house has had nothing to do with the acquisition of theological materials. After the integration of nineteen faculty libraries, both large and small, the Helsinki University Library became, little by little, step by step, a great digital library trying to satisfy the needs of tens of thousands of users. We still have our collections of printed books, but the future belongs to the digital library with its great variety of connections to all available knowledge and research. Clearly, my institution is now quite different to how it was back in 2010. But BETH has also changed significantly in these years.

I joined the BETH Board in 2012, and I have been privileged to work with great colleagues and to know so many fine librarians. One of the decisions we made was to organise each annual meeting around a particular topic, which would be both inclusive and compact at the same time. I think this decision has made it easier to get to know other colleagues, their libraries, and their particular situations in various different countries. The Digital Revolution has had a notable impact on all theological libraries, and the revolution itself is constantly changing. We still do not know what kind of roles theological libraries will take in the future, with the advance of Open Access and various forms of social media, which also are becoming part of scholarly communication. I still think that BETH is the right place for theological librarians to come together, a space to get the courage to face the future and to find new ways of being professional librarians in the changing academic world. There are good things that no one will do if we do not do them. We just have to find what they are and work on them.

One of our BETH veterans who is now retired once described the BETH annual meetings as ‘ecclesiastical tourism’. Sometimes the best things are written between the lines and great things happen outside the official programme. Personal contacts among the attendees of BETH meetings are valuable, and often we do not even see ourselves how great an impact they have on us and our professional integrity. We all noticed the lack of these informal connections when the corona pandemic forced us to organise two annual meetings, both in 2020 and 2021, as online only.

BETH was founded in Western Europe, but in the past 10 years, it has been spreading towards the East. There is no need to explain how important this is for the future of BETH. And besides, I think we all are waiting to meet one day in Ukraine.

## From the Departing BETH Representative

### ABTAPL, BETH, and Me

**Rev. Dr Penelope R. Hall**

Retired member and Church Minister in Canada

Shortly after I joined ABTAPL, I discovered, at one of the general meetings, that the British Association was a member of the Le Conseil International des Associations de Bibliothèques de Théologie and that they needed someone who spoke both French and German to represent ABTAPL at a Conseil meeting. As I met this prerequisite and was willing to go, I was appointed as the ABTAPL representative to the Conseil. This was the beginning of a very interesting and challenging part of my life.

Very quickly I found myself making some very valuable connections with our European colleagues, as well as, a few years later, our North American colleagues, members of the American Theological Library Association, too. Presented with the burgeoning field of automation, digital tools, and internet access, we began working together on a multi-lingual indexing project which would help us make resources available to all member libraries: ETHERELI (European Thesaurus for Indexing in Religious Libraries). With financial help from the EU, we launched a pilot project, which proved to be extremely challenging. Although we did manage to develop a



workable index tool for certain limited areas of study, we failed to secure additional funding past the pilot and eventually had to disband the project. Nevertheless, participation in this project put me thoroughly into the working of the Conseil and subsequently, I was elected to serve as Secretary of the association.

It was an honour to serve as Secretary of the Conseil and to have the responsibility to plan the annual meetings, which moved from country to country, hosted each time by a different European members' association. This gave me the opportunity to get to know our members better and to appreciate the strengths and the unique collections held by some of the great historical libraries. At the annual meeting of the Conseil in 1999, we voted to change the name of the umbrella association to Bibliothèques Européennes de Théologie – the BETH we know today – in order to more accurately reflect the actual composition of the association.

In addition, while I was in office, I had the privilege of representing the European Associations at the annual meetings of ATLA, and, for a couple of years, served on the editorial board of their online journal *Theological Librarianship: An Online Journal of the American Theological Library Association*.

I also helped the Indian Theological Library Association draw up the articles of their formal constitution at a meeting in Bangalore, and briefly visited some of the other libraries in the Asian Forum of Theological Libraries (ForATL) and member libraries of the Australian- New Zealand Theological Library Association (ANZTLA). By far the best part of my job was making friends and learning from my colleagues in Britain, Europe, and around the world. At times, I was able to serve as consultant to other theological libraries and help them solve some of the difficulties that they were facing. In particular, as the academic world became more and more automated, libraries moved to using more digital resources. This, in turn, led to the possibility of sharing resources more easily over the internet and the necessity of drawing up guidelines and security protocols for internet usage. This put me on a steep learning curve bringing more challenges to keep me on my toes, but also increasing my thankfulness for various connections with colleagues with expertise in information technology. This knowledge has served me very well in so many other endeavours beside the library world.

It really is impossible to sum up a delightful thirty-year association with ABTAPL and BETH in a few words. I am grateful to my colleagues for their support and for the honour of serving these associations. Please accept this very brief memoire as my thank you note for the privileges you have given me.

## Mission in the Age of Digitalisation: Metaverse, Metamodernism, and Metanarrative [1]

**Rev. Dr Guichun Jun**

Research & Admissions Tutor, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, UK

We are living in a transitional period where the metaverse is expected to shape our future in all aspects of our lives. In particular, the metaverse and other relevant computing technologies have already led us into a new era of Christian mission. There is no doubt that the metaverse is a significant mission field for the next generation. Churches and mission agencies need to recognise the urgency of developing practical strategies and methods for mission in the metaverse. However, it is equally vital for them to realise some of the negative trends manifested in the metaverse, which need attention from cultural, social, and theological perspectives in order to consider missional approaches to deal with the underlying thoughts underpinning the trends.

The first negative trends of the metaverse are digital identities and 'imago meta'. It is not difficult to foresee that humans will identify more closely with the digital identities they have created than with their real identities given to them by God when the metaverse has deeply permeated our lives and creates an irresistible digital lifestyle in the future. There is a reasonable concern that the God-given identity

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[1] This is a summary of 'Mission in the Age of Digitisation: Metaverse, Metamodernism, and Metanarrative' which is the 11th chapter in "Together in the Mission of God" published by WCC publications to commemorate the centennial anniversary of IMC (International Missionary Council). This book is available on the website of WCC publications ([https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/TogetherInTheMissionOfGod\\_Web.pdf](https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/TogetherInTheMissionOfGod_Web.pdf))

‘imago Dei’ would be conflated with the self-made identity ‘imago meta’ crafted in the metaverse.[2]

The second negative metaverse trend is disembodiment which separates the physical body from the virtually expanded consciousness. If one’s existence is closely related to self-awareness recognising one’s ontological existence in the real world and one’s presence is connected to consciousness realising one’s experiences in the virtual environment through one’s ontic avatar, disembodiment in the metaverse causes depersonalisation by disabling self-awareness of users and increasing the sense of presence through reinforcing the sense of spatial presence, involvement, and reality in their immersive virtual experiences.[3]

Finally, the metaverse would be a virtual platform to realise virtual immortality and digital resurrection to construct the human utopia. There are people who pursue the possibility of immortality by uploading their consciousness into cyberspace.[4]

Digital cloning technology in combination with holographic technology makes the “Digital Resurrection” of the deceased already possible at the stage of practical use.

The aforementioned negative trends of the metaverse will bring complex and multifaceted challenges not only to Christian ethics and theology but also to the Christian worldview concerning Christian ontology, epistemology, and anthropology.

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[2] The term ‘Imago Meta’ was coined by Ian Harber and Patrick Miller in their article ‘How to Prepare for the Metaverse’ to describe a virtually created being by a human user in opposition to “Imago Dei” describing a human being created by God in His image. Ian Harber & Patrick Miller, “How to Prepare for the Metaverse.” The Gospel Coalition, Last modified November 2, 2021, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/prepare-metaverse>

[3] Thomas Schubert, “The sense of presence in virtual environments: A three-component scale measuring spatial presence, involvement and realness,” *Journal of Media Psychology* 15, no. 2 (2003): 69.

[4] Tim Jordan, *Cyberpower: The Culture and Politics of Cyberspace and the Internet* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 2002), 28; Jonna Quitney Anderson and Harrison Rainie, *The future of the Internet: Ubiquity, mobility, security* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 311.

The biblical understanding of the ontological nature of humanity and the epistemological understanding of reality will be seriously challenged in the era of the metaverse. These negative sociocultural trends of the metaverse are at the stage of producing emergent patterns at present and will become dominant cultural regularities nurtured and underpinned by metamodernism and transhumanism.

In their article 'Notes on Metamodernism', Vermeulen and van den Akker "explain that the prefix 'Meta' was derived from the word 'Metaxy' in Plato's Symposium, which means 'Betweenness'. [5] Vermeulen and van den Akker interpret the term 'betweenness' as an oscillation that engages two opposing philosophical stances, modernism and postmodernism, like a pendulum swinging between the two poles. [6] In this light, the oscillations of human identities and perceptions of reality between the real world and the metaverse are underpinned by the metamodern ontology and epistemology. Metamodern ontology, in particular, emphasises co-existence and hybridity between humans and their avatars in the metaverse. The concept of the human-avatar symbiosis is not only about the co-existence of biological humans and digital humans (avatars) but also about co-evolution by reciprocal interactions and mutual dependence, which seems to be a new type of ontological syncretism amalgamating human and avatar ontologies. [7]

Another underlying philosophy underpinning the phenomena of the metaverse is transhumanism. Humans have been always trying to overcome physical limitations and enhance living conditions for a better life. However, the contemporary version of transhumanism is more than an intellectual movement but a religion that conceives of a superhuman state free of illness, unhappiness, and death through the use of advanced technology. [8] Many transhumanists have professed faith in the eventual uploading of human minds into machine bodies and virtual reality in the pursuit of immortality, which is their religious concept of salvation. [9]

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[5] Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, "Notes on Metamodernism," *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 2, no. 1. (2010): 5, DOI: 10.3402/jac.v2i0.5677

[6] Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on Metamodernism," 5.

[7] Peter Hancock, *Mind, Machine and Morality: Toward a Philosophy of Human-Technology Symbiosis* (London: CRC Press, 2009), 56.

[8] Robert Geraci, *Virtually Sacred: Myth and Meaning in World of Warcraft and Second Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 287.

[9] Geraci, *Virtually Sacred*, 287.

One of the noticeable aspects of metamodernism is that it engages in the resurgence of metanarratives and universal truths. This positive side of metamodernism can be used as a missional tool to reintroduce the biblical metanarratives, which can bring hope to humanity by overcoming the hopelessness and deconstruction caused by postmodernism's cynical irony and relativistic skepticism toward universal truths.

This paper now lays out the three main narratives that the Christian mission needs to particularly focus on as missional responses toward the phenomena and philosophies of the metaverse.

Firstly, Genesis 1:26-27 exposes that the *imago Dei* is best understood as human identity since humanity was created in a manner appropriate to the realization of its God-given identity.[10] This God-given identity has a distinctive theological role to play, which is the unique office as a divine representative and divine reflection.[11] In the era of the metaverse, humans may replace their God-given identity with the virtual identities that they create in the metaverse. Humans may also alter God's mandate from actualising God's divine purpose to actualising human ambition. *Imago Dei* is not only related to who we are but also what we are created for as God's image bearers. After creating the first human in His image, God gave him the mandate to act as His agent to cultivate the real world that He created. This mandate is the original mission of God given to humankind so *imago Dei* is inseparable from '*Missio Dei*' since both are central to human existence as the cultural mandate of God ties both together.[12]

The second narrative is Jesus's incarnation which shows the corporeal embodiment of the divinity and the humanity of Jesus. Different from the concept of avatar in Hinduism which is about manifestations of divine beings (taking forms of humans or animals so that they are not truly embodied in flesh), Jesus's divine nature

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[10] Ryan Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity: A Theological Interpretation* (Philadelphia, PA: Penn State University Press, 2016), 120.

[11] Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 184.

[12] Clark Fobes, "Imago Dei in Missio Dei: Biblical Foundations for Work and Mission," The Evangelical Missiological Society Southwest Regional Conference 2018, 2-3.

[https://www.academia.edu/36262616/IMAGO\\_DEI\\_IN\\_MISSIO\\_DEI\\_BIBLICAL\\_FOUNDATION\\_S\\_FOR\\_WORK\\_AND\\_MISSION..](https://www.academia.edu/36262616/IMAGO_DEI_IN_MISSIO_DEI_BIBLICAL_FOUNDATION_S_FOR_WORK_AND_MISSION..)

became completely embodied in human flesh, which was seeable, touchable, and even killable to offer Himself as the eternal atonement for our sins. The real theological peril expected in the disembodied age is that the metaverse can play a role to foster a disembodied theology, such as digital Docetism that denies corporeality to be fully embodied human or digital Gnosticism that undermines the significance of physical experiences of humans in the ordinary earthly life.

The final biblical narrative is the eschatological event as the hope for the restoration of God's kingdom against the transhumanist utopia. Transhumanism pursues the evolutionary development of cloning human minds for the very telos of human existence in the metaverse and of cybernetic immortality after death as its soteriological goal.[13] In addition, transhumanism is based on a techno-optimist perspective on the eschatological end of the physical world, which will be accomplished by human efforts alone.[14] This soteriological goal and eschatological hope of transhumanism aim to replace traditional religions by proclaiming that through technology transhumanism can achieve what traditional religions have sought for millennia: immortality and the establishment of a cyberspace utopia.[15] It is significant for Christians to proclaim the biblical version of eschatology to enable humans to live their ordinary lives either in joy or suffering through embracing the suffering of Christ and the hope that He will restore His kingdom.

These three narratives are the essential parts of the Bible containing the core messages for biblical soteriology, Christology, and eschatology. This interesting feature is a strong justification to emphasise the necessity of reintroducing the biblical metanarrative in a fresh way, not only to rescue God's people from the complicating confusion caused by the philosophies of this age but also to expand the Kingdom of God in both this physical world and the virtual world.

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[13] Mikael Leidenhag, "Saved Through Technology: Exploring the Soteriology and Eschatology of Transhumanism," *Religion Compass* 14, no. 11 (November 2020): 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12377>.

[14] Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith," *Journal of Religion and Science* 47, no. 4 (December 2012): 725.

[15] Tirosh-Samuelson, "Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith," 715.

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## Put a Ring on It: Engaging Your Users [1]

**Hannie Riley**

Librarian, Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

### Introduction

There are many ways to increase the stream of users coming through the library doors: high-tech equipment, top-notch buildings, airy spaces with lots of natural light, comfortable study spaces, high quality yet easily accessible digital resources, all kinds of useful books, historically valuable materials, widening access policies, long opening hours including weekends, active online presence, numerous helpful and capable staff, interesting programmes, useful training, wonderful events and exhibitions, café(s) serving delicious food and drink, and so on. The list is endless. This sort of high-quality library service provision can definitely increase user satisfaction and numbers; As Mohindra and Kumar point out, "user satisfaction and library service quality are ultimate goals of libraries as service organisations" (2015, 54).

However, in this article my focus is on library users themselves. Rather than looking at what we can provide and do for them, I would like to concentrate on users and how to build relationships with them. The reasons are clear: firstly, winning over our users adds value to our purpose, and secondly, it is simply being practical and realistic. I am in a library where there is a restriction on manpower and financial resources which allows no scope for the types of outstanding customer service provisions listed above. Therefore, focusing on my specific customers and their user experience might be the only doable and achievable option I can possibly have. After all, our value is not just limited to preservation of historical materials but how these materials are utilised by real people. It is vital to let people continuously come

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[1] This article is based on a talk given at the BETH conference 2019, Oxford.



through the library door, whether physically or virtually, as our survival and funding tend to depend on the number of users, the frequency of their visits, and their levels of satisfaction with our service.

I also want to go one step further. I consider library users as active participants who also take part in the library provision, not being mere consumers who submissively receive the provision of our service. I would like to engage with customers, build up relationships with them, then turn them towards the business of the library, enabling them to feel ownership of the library's provision. Is my viewpoint unique? It is not.

Bolton recognised that due to the development of technology “customer preferences and behaviour are evolving rapidly” in the business environment. She pointed out that “organisations must focus on creating customer experiences that build relationships because they face new competitive pressures in a complex and dynamic marketplace”.[2]

Libraries can also benefit from this perspective as we too recognise this ‘competitive pressure’ in the library domain. Nowadays, a user's physical presence is much less prominent in the library building, and in the comfort of their own homes, many rely on free information through Wikipedia or Google. This results in many students lacking confidence when searching the library's digital catalogue. They tend to use Google Scholar primarily and demand access to these materials without checking the library database. Innovations in 21st-century technology have certainly shaped and changed the library users' behaviour and their expectations of the library, for better or for worse. Lucas-Alfieri believed that “academic libraries are at a crossroads” of survival and “a user-centric approach will guide the development and the future mission of our twenty-first century libraries”.[3]

To create experiences that build customer relations, I must create new opportunities for the users to be involved in the library service. I am certain that I am not inventing new methods here, but, by simply listing the actions which I have been undertaking in my library, I hope to open a dialogue to discuss and share know-how with fellow experts and professionals.

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[2] R. N. Bolton, *Service Excellence: Creating Customer Experiences that Build Relationships* (New York: Business Expert Press, 2016), 1.

[3] Debra Lucas-Alfieri. *Marketing the 21st Century Library: The Time is Now*. (Amsterdam: Chandos Publishing, 2015), 5.

## Building Relationships with Library Users

What are the benefits of having strong relationship with our customers? Axner clarified the reasons to build relationships.[4]

Firstly, “we need relationships in order to win allies to our cause”. As the new librarian stepping into my predecessor’s shoes, which had been worn for almost twenty years before I joined in 2018, was a huge challenge. The retired librarian had made a wonderful contribution to the development of the library and was deeply loved by the community over many years. Inevitably new blood brings some uncomfortable adjustments. To face less resistance to these changes, I believed then and still do believe now in the importance of making more allies in the library.

Secondly, according to Axner, “our relationships give meaning and richness to our work and to our lives”. As a part-time lone worker, ultimately I am short-staffed at all times, and, in reality, I really need a community behind me to support the running of the library. As we are here to provide service to users, reaching out to them enthusiastically, engaging with them, and getting them ‘on side’ is vital for the success of the library business. I believe in not only opening the library door and resources to users but also inviting them “to share joys and the struggles” of library business and service provision. This will make users active and feel a sense of ownership; hence the library usage rate will increase as well as promotion of orderly behaviour in the library by raising users’ collective conduct.[5]

Lastly, “community building occurs one-to-one”. Axner saw that some people become involved in an organisation because they believe in the cause but many only need a relationship with another person who is already involved to spark their interest. This argument also coincides with Bolton’s view. She viewed that the customer experience journey starts at service offering, as in her ‘Customer Experience’ diagram shown below.[6] The customer journey flows into customer

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[4] Marya Axner, "Section 7 Building and Sustaining Relationship." Community Tool Box, Accessed May 1, 2023. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-functions/build-sustain-relationships/main>

[5] Axner, "Building and Sustaining Relationship"

[6] Axner, "Building and Sustaining Relationship"

satisfaction which is the “customer’s purchase and post-consumption response to the service”. [7] The next stage is the customer’s engagement behaviour (social responses like word-of-mouth interactions) then lastly customer experience. “The customer experience interacts with the organisation’s reputation”. [8] I believe that the users who are on my side through our own strong relationship will bring other users in and advocate for the library on behalf of the librarian to others.

Now let us move from ‘why we form relationships with users’ to ‘how we actually do it’.

### Step 1: Creating connections

The first step in building a relationship is simply getting to know each other. Unless you make yourself known to others, they will not even know that you exist. Just like dating, you have to put yourself forward. If you are in an independent library, you have to market your library to a wider audience through various means. If you work

in an educational establishment like I do, there are many readily provided by the institution. Students also have an expectation of a library in their educational setting. In my case, the library induction for new students is in their timetable for the freshers’ week. This is well organised and advertised by the programme services team and thankfully I just have to turn up to give the talk.

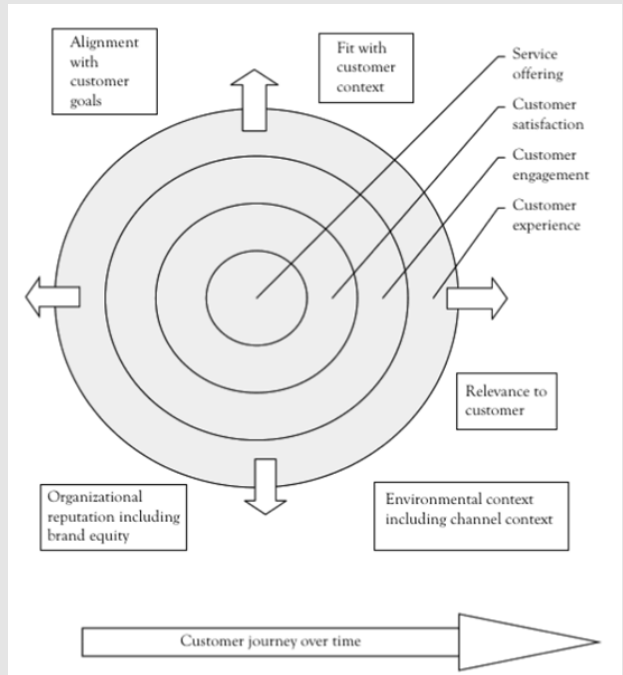


Figure 1. The Customer Experience by Bolton, R. [9]

[7] Ruth Bolton, *Service Excellence: Creating Customer Experiences that Build Relationships* (New York: Business Expert Press, 2016), 6.

[8] Bolton, *Service Excellence*, 6.

[9] Bolton, *Service Excellence*, 5.

However, I think this spoon-fed service is not enough when it comes to creating connections with students. You have to be proactive, to go out there to show yourself. It is important to grab every possible platform where you can present your library. This will require you to talk to various other library colleagues, departments, students, and academics. Networking with other professionals will widen your circle to increase your chances to connect with users.

It is also a good idea to hold and advertise all forms of the library guide so they can learn about the library even before they are at the library, both digitally and in printed handouts. If you are brave enough, having your picture in the guide booklet is one way to make yourself familiar to library users.

## **Step 2: Igniting the spark**

Whichever opportunities you have to stand in front of your potential or new users, it is up to you what sort of impression you give them. For induction talks, well-prepared and rehearsed presentations will give the users a good impression of you and the library service. Refresh the talk and slides regularly, and if possible do not be scared to use new technology to impress the digitally receptive generation. Investigate what is out there and utilise as much as you can. You will be surprised to learn how many new software applications are available for free download or at a small cost. The apps received by our library users with great enthusiasm and excitement, which I have used, are thinglink[10], Prezi[11], and Powtoon.[12] The way I discovered these exciting apps was not via the University training programme or big marketing campaigns, but through a network of other librarians. I was interested in how they practise their services and operations and asked for their opinions and advice. Some were kind enough to give me one-to-one training.

## **Step 3: Intimacy**

The relationship develops and we move to a deeper level with communication.

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[10] For example, we have used this app to create an interactive library floorplan: <https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1486723674131136513?buttonSource=viewLimits>.

[11] For a group-specific induction, I have used this app to create the following presentation: <https://prezi.com/view/UVkRkmXUIHQDf6Gchikr/>.

[12] This app helped to create an animated induction video as you can see here: <https://www.wycliffe.ox.ac.uk/using-library#collapse3137156>

## Tell them more of what you do

*Via digital: New library webpage*[13]

As many students rely heavily on digital devices nowadays, it is a good idea to have an active social presence such as a website, Facebook, and Twitter. I have opted to provide only a library website for now as our digital presence, and it has taken me over a year to get this right. There were many obstacles and complications that I had not foreseen to create the webpages, but I am glad to declare that we now have a proper library tab on our college website, with a wealth of information and links out to much more. I hope that the library not only has a physical place but also a virtual space for the user.

*Via Library Newsletter*

Regular updates via a newsletter is a classic way to deliver your message and news to the users. Choose a means which is most popular for them to read. One librarian once told me that she sent her newsletters to the student body to circulate, as this was the most appreciated amongst their library users. In my case, we have a college-run weekly newsletter called Update, so I send my notice to the Editor. I also leave print-outs of the newsletter on the library desk as well as displaying it on the notice board to capture more of an audience.

*face-to-face*

You cannot beat an old-fashioned face-to-face talk. Staff and students meet weekly to share community notices, so I make sure to join this. Whenever there is a need for an announcement from the library, I can slot myself in. On a personal level, I believe one-to-one is the best chance to go deeper into library services and provide background information on its provision. However, be cautious as there is a danger that a personal relationship might be interpreted as a route towards favour, such as waiving of fines and bending rules for the library user. Keep it professional: it is important to know the boundaries and guidelines. Safeguarding training as well as mental health first aid courses are very good to attend if you can.

## Listen to their opinion

Clemons et al. pointed out that “how users perceive and value what is available to them is central to effective [library] service design and delivery” and “it [is] more important than ever that libraries develop effective methods of collecting user feedback about library services to help understand and anticipate its users’ needs”.[14]

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[13] Check out the library webpage from <https://www.wycliffe.ox.ac.uk/library>

[14] Clemons, Nance and Ballinger, “Board in the Library: A Quick and Easy Solution to Gathering Library User Feedback,” *Tennessee Libraries* 66, no. 2 (2016) <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/board-library-quick-easy-solution-gathering-user/docview/1874420898/se-2>.

There are many ways to collect feedback: conducting a reader web- or paper-based survey; opening official and unofficial community channels; having a focus group; creating a web memo form; networking with other librarians to find out what other library users also say about their libraries in order to learn of new trends, and so on.

One thing I think we should never overlook is the silent multitude. They are the ones who do not vocalise their demands loudly to grab our attention, will behave in an orderly manner and look very confident when using the resources. Therefore, often they are often not on our radar. Their quietness might suggest that all is well in the library but also it might be that they are simply very forgiving and adaptable. Trying to capture this audience is tough. I tend to get them talking

when in more informal social occasions such as community events or at the lunch table. Additionally, I am constantly thinking that I need to become the voice for the voiceless and provide services from their perspective too.

### Show interest in what they do and consider acts of service

To show you want to engage your users, you also have to be forthcoming and be creative. I have a few examples that I would like to share with you.

Back in April 2019, looking at the student notice board, I learnt a student-led reading group was regularly meeting to study Feminist theology, and was planning on holding a conference that May. I asked for their book list, acquired the books, and offered to purchase copies at a discount through my book supplier. I displayed new titles before the conference in the foyer. Much to my surprise, this was the most praised and thanked work I had done over that year by either students or academics.

Throwing an event is a winner to earn one's heart. Although our college is named after John Wycliffe, unfortunately, we do not hold any manuscripts of the Wycliffite Bible, the first English translation in the 14th century. When I learnt that some other libraries in Oxford had copies, I organised visits for our community: staff first; two groups of students; and conference participants. This required much more administrative work and hours than I initially anticipated but it was well received with appreciation.

Another easy way to give back is literally, by giving presents. We tend to have more books from donations than we can possibly house so why not give away books to users? I have created a corner in the library for give-away books, many

users come and regularly check for these freebies. I believe that the more they take, the more they feel obliged to do something for the library in return.

#### **Step 4: Commitment: Put a ring on it**

It has been a long journey to impress and woo our users with presents and events to win them over. Where are we with them now? I think this is the time to get down on one knee and propose a formal union. There are two obvious ways that the library users can be involved in the library business.

#### Library committee

When I started in this position, I learnt that there was no library committee so I wanted to set one up straight away. I believe in committees. I do not consider it a limitation to my freedom of library management, restricting my capability as the librarian, but rather believing it creates buy-in—making decisions together after exchanging ideas and collective discussion means people will be more invested in the success of the project.

Furthermore, I knew that in order to bring many new changes and introduce new policies and procedures in the library I had to try my upmost to gather shared thoughts and hear every possible voice for a better solution from the beginning. I wanted to provide an official channel for each representative to express his or her concerns and inconveniences about library issues. To be honest, it is not a comfortable place to be in sometimes. However, in the same way, each Rep has to pay attention to what I have to say in return. This has given me the opportunity to justify my side of the story so it was useful when complaints and difficulties have been brought up formally too.

With time to spend together to discuss improvements to library provision and to work together for better services, I have noticed that although the library representatives are mostly neutral and objective, they also become keen to advocate for the library in some ways. Equipped with background information through meetings they often speak to the students on my behalf and share the library's perspective on the way the library runs and the librarian's perspective in certain situations.

Of course, this is a less direct and time-consuming way to get to your finishing line but in my experience, after good consultation with the committee, new changes

are received with less resistance. This is not only in terms of the library users but also the senior management team. New policies and procedures are usually accepted more readily once they have been informed of the fact that the library committee already approved them. Therefore, in the long run I have actually saved time and effort – and experienced fewer fights.

## Library volunteers

In our college, there are two sorts of volunteers. All live-in students have to sign up for a ‘college job’ (some kind of a chore). Thankfully, I am officially assigned 10 library volunteers each term. Although it has not been plain sailing to manage the student volunteers, I still value their help in the library. As the library was their preferred choice for their ‘college job’, they tend to love being in the library or dealing with books. Over time, they become concerned and care about the library business from the library perspective. When I am away, I have noticed that they are the ones who voluntarily tidy up the library and leave a warning notice to students about their misconduct. In addition, continual open communication to volunteers can increase student input on new provisions and changes in the library service. They tend to throw more innovative and creative ideas and solutions, which I never thought about, and often share the same frustrations with me about other users’ misconduct.

I also recruit unofficial ad hoc volunteers. I mostly ask for proofreading of library guides or publicity materials and feedback on these. Or I might ask for volunteers to test out new forms and changes. My experience is that they become more receptive to the content of whatever piece they have proofread, and end up being more aware of available services in the library.

## **Conclusion: Continue to Invest in the Relationship for the Future**

Unlike in fairy tales, the wedding is not an ending in real life. We must continuously invest in time, resources, and effort to sustain a relationship. It is the same in terms of the library service and provision. We have to stay current and relevant to appeal to our users, using various new ways to communicate and interact. I might have to compromise our accustomed practice and experiment with new devices even if these might not be to my liking. As Bolton says “excellent service creates customer experiences that build relationships”.<sup>[15]</sup>

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[15] Bolton, *Service Excellence*, 4.



In the academic year which followed the original presentation of this paper, I introduced online reading lists to the college. We were one of the early adopters of this within the University, and this idea was very well received by our student body at that time and continues to be so.

I am sure that what you have read about today wasn't entirely new to you. However, by discussing the route to reader engagement with you, even if you already know or have been doing what I describe, I hope to open up channels of communication so that you can share your stories with me, so I can learn from your innovative services in return. Fostering good relationships with our users is essential, but so too is developing links with colleagues and learning from each other, which is exactly what BETH allows us to do.

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## Looking into the Crystal Ball: The MF Norwegian School of Theology Library Ten Years from Now [1]

**Hanne Storm Ofteland & Rune Keisuke Kosaka**

Chief Librarian & Senior Librarian, The MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion, and Society, Oslo, Norway

With this presentation, we would like to try out the gentle art of divination.

"The purpose of the library is not to lend paper books. If that were the case, libraries would end up on the scrap heap of history, like Kodak who thought that their business idea was to sell analogue film, while in reality, it was to help people record and save important moments in life—what used to be called ‘Kodak moments’. The purpose of libraries is to enable people to find the information they need in ways that suit each one and that are effective for society. Therefore, today libraries are more important than ever. Through millennia libraries have demonstrated their ability to adapt to technological change. So also today." [2]

### **MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society**

The MF Library is a theological library, but first and foremost a HE library, and as such we need to take into consideration all the rules and regulations that apply to this sector. As our institution is broadening its scope, now providing both teachers' education as well as studies in social sciences, the development of the library's collections are also subject to change.

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[1] This article is based on a presentation given at the BETH conference 2023.

[2] Lars Egeland, former Library Director, Oslo Metropolitan University (Egeland 2021)

The library staff consists of 5 permanent full-time positions, with one position dedicated to the historical archives that MF is hosting.[3]

We are currently using ALMA and Primo as our library catalogue system, managing users, interlibrary lending, and access to digital resources. The reading list system, Leganto, is integrated with ALMA, providing a one-stop shop for most of our users. Each semester we publish approximately 80 courses in Leganto, and after having used this for one full year now, we hope that this will henceforth be perceived as a timesaver and quality-enhancer for both our students and faculty.

## **MF Students**

95% of our primary patrons are students. All new students get an introduction to the library at the start of their studies, and we also provide classes in information literacy to both Bachelor's and Master's students. In 2021 MF established a writing centre staffed by Master's students. It is physically situated in the library and administratively is organised by and sits under the chief librarian. An associate professor is responsible for the training of the writing consultants.

## **The Library as a Social Space?**

The Library today provides a handful of computer workstations, some spaces for small groups and individual seating (but no designated group study rooms), and a quiet reading room filled with study carrels. The library is also home to an event area, 'The Third Space', as well as the MF Writing Centre 'Babel's Table'.

But the library space is crowded. It is filled up with bookshelves and book collections that are not in high demand, and there is little space for the students to 'hang out'. Thus, it is not very attractive as a study space for the majority of our students.

## **MF Faculty**

The Library offers different types of services to the academic staff: inter-library loans, purchasing necessary materials, assistance with course lists, and more

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[3] The library is also home to our institution's historical archive, as well as quite a few private archives of importance to Norwegian church history and MF.

more recently, assistance with everything related to open science. The library is responsible for the institution's research registration. We also administer the university's open access repository, MF Open, where journal articles from our faculty, as well as MF's own journals, and student theses, are archived. The Library also administers the institution's APC agreements.[4]

Being a small, specialised university, and with researchers highly specialised within very different research areas, the question is this: How can we as a library offer good enough services to all of them, given our both financially and staff-wise limited resources?

The illustration below shows an overview of ongoing research projects at MF:

## How to serve diverse research projects like these?



### DEChriM Research Project

Deconstructing Early Christian  
Metanarratives: Fourth-Century Egyptian  
Christianity in the Light of Material  
Evidence.



### The Early History of the Codex

The Early History of the Codex is designed to  
place the study of the development and  
spread of the codex on more reliable  
foundations.



### INTERSECT

Intersecting Flows of Islamophobia studies  
'Islamophobia' as a global phenomenon  
transmitted beyond local communities of  
origin through tropes, persons and artefacts,  
and as a phenomenon negotiated at various  
scales.



### MEMOROBIA

Memorialisation of Romani enslavement in  
territories of contemporary Romania.



### Mythopolitics in South Asia

Project MYTHOPOL seeks to understand the  
role of hegemonic Hindu storyworlds in the  
contemporary political field.



### The Living Pen of Scribes

The ICH-funded project, The Living Pen of  
Scribes, brings together researchers from  
Image Sciences, Physics, Archaeology,  
Religious Studies, Media Studies and Dead  
Sea Scroll studies in a new interdisciplinary  
and holistic approach to the study of the  
Dead Sea Scrolls.



### Vatavaria-Breberium-Bribir

The project concentrates on the late antique  
and early medieval occupation of Bribir,  
one of the best preserved archaeological  
sites of Croatia.

[4] APC = Article Processing Charges. In this model the author (or their surrogate) pays the publisher a fee to get their article published open access.

## Analysing the Surrounding (Trying to Look into the Crystal Ball)



Detail of Christ as Salvator Mundi. (Attributed to) Leonardo da Vinci. C. 1499-1510. Oil on walnut panel. Public Domain.

### PEST - Identifying 'Big Picture' Possibilities and Treats

With a PEST analysis (looking at Political, Economic, Social, and Technological developments) we try to identify opportunities for growth and development in facilities and services to support the library and its users. We also try to see if there are any threats that should be considered.

So, who are the agents? What are their interests?

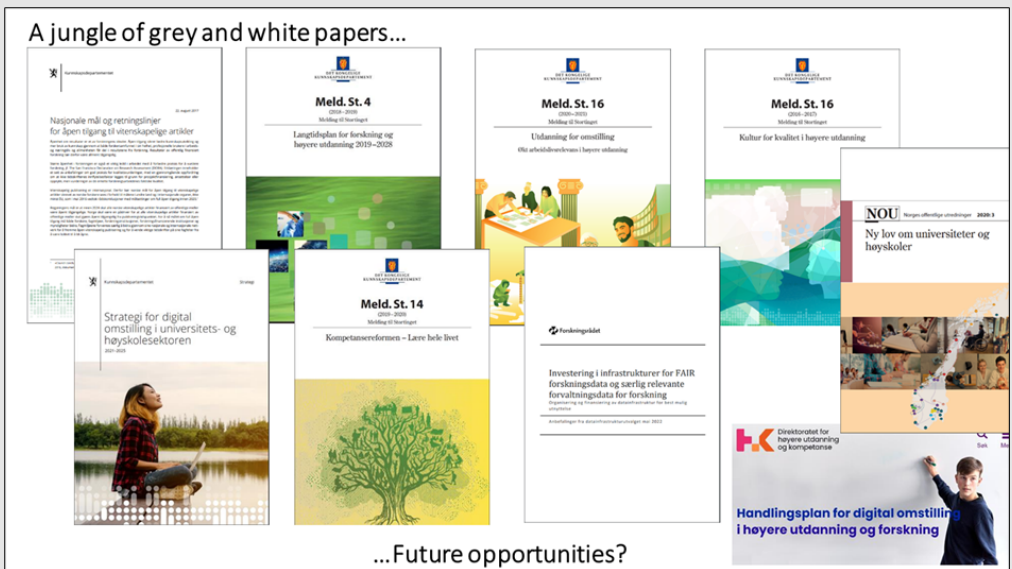
Looking at the socio-economic forces there are some strong forces at work:

- With the commercialisation and streamlining of education (BA, MA, PhD), it is now possible to study and earn a degree at top-range universities all over the world.
- The market for international students is shrinking; as of autumn 2023, the Norwegian government will charge tuition fees for international students (that is, students from outside the EU/EEC area).

The higher education landscape has changed significantly during the last decades. Politicians today think differently about what higher education should be, about the purpose of higher education, and about what skills should be taught. We have moved away from the Humboldt idea of the university as a place for Bildung, and it is becoming more like a school providing the subjects and skills necessary for

different professions. The citizens (they are paying the bill, after all) want more 'bang for their buck'. The walls of the ivory tower are coming down. The official policies and trends in Norway since the mid-1990s have been towards fewer but larger HE institutions.

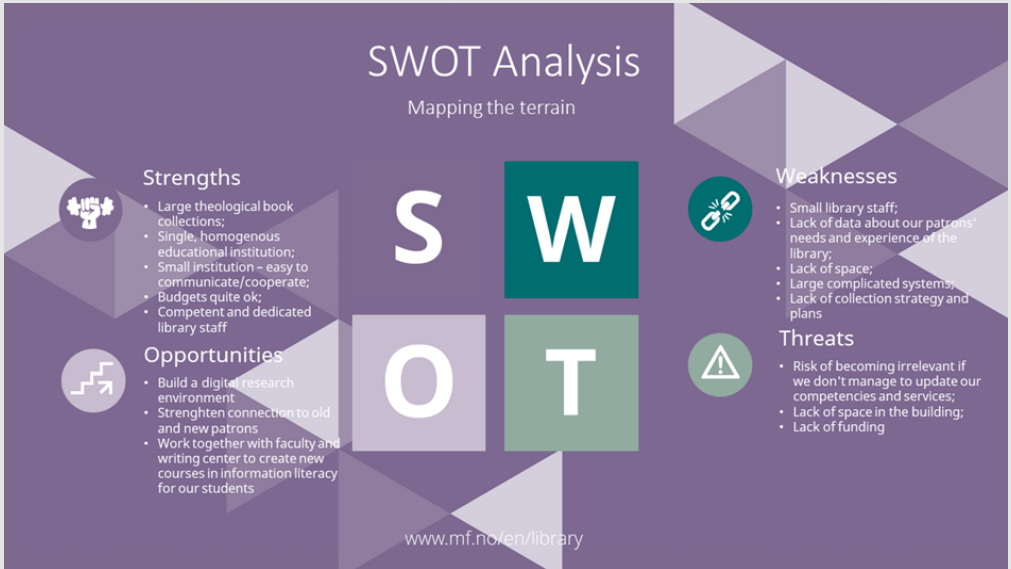
The ways we learn are changing. And there are demographic changes. We live longer, and the population is aging. Adults who already have a professional career need more tailored shorter courses and education to update their knowledge. Then there is also the need for distance learning.



Some examples of relevant grey and white papers that also affect the libraries' work and focus.

## PEST - Identifying 'Big Picture' Possibilities and Treats

So, what does the future hold for the MF Library? Where will we be 10 years from now? We have tried to pinpoint some possibilities and threats. Let's take you through a brief SWOT analysis:



The size of the library staff is the number one challenge. Our library uses the same advanced systems as other HE libraries, but where many university libraries have individual teams for different functions (ILL, licenses, etc.), we need to be able to provide the same services from within the same (quite small) staff. Everyone needs to know a bit about everything.

And what about our library as a theological library? Until quite recently our focus was on theology as our primary patrons were studying the theological discipline. Our collections were within the fields of humanistic subjects in general, and theology more specifically. The last decade or so the social sciences have made an entry into the school, and thus had a huge impact on the library collections.

As the sector is moving from paying for journal subscriptions to article processing charges (APCs), this must also affect the library's budget and its collection policy. Two-thirds of the library's budget is normally spent on journal subscriptions and licenses. In the future, these funds will be moved to pay for publishing instead of reading. It cannot be the library's responsibility, mandate, or area of expertise, to decide where or what our scholars should publish. As a direct consequence of this, the Library has recently been moved from the Director's area of responsibility to sitting under the Pro-Rector for Research in our organisational chart.

The number of visitors to the library is also decreasing: we need to bring our students back in.

## **Where and How Can We Cooperate?**

Within our own institution, we need to cooperate with our teachers to strengthen the students' information literacy competencies, for instance through embedded librarianship.

External cooperation:

UHR-Library (a national strategic unit of Universities Norway) works strategically and coordinates works on behalf of libraries in our sector. Two important topics they are published reports on lately are document delivery to patrons outside of their own institution (ILL) (2021) and shared publishing services for the HE sector (2021). We participate in their network and exchange ideas and experiences with our Norwegian colleagues here.

Our national FTRB network could be put to better use. Now we have an annual two-day meeting and some e-mail exchanges during the year. For instance, we could arrange joint webinars, or work together on different projects. It could also be fruitful to cooperate on joint purchases of literature within specific topics, and subject areas. We would also welcome working closer together with our Swedish and Finnish colleagues, and with all European colleagues in the BETH network.

The current Norwegian national library strategy (2020-2023) issued by the Ministry of Culture together with the Ministry of Education and Research, aims to bridge the gap between public libraries, school libraries, and HE libraries, and to 'merge' them together in a more seamless network. In the strategy, it is written how HE libraries need to function as knowledge centres for the entire population. The government emphasises how important it is to life-long learning and the need for updating professional skills. Through our national library network, we already work closely together with inter-library loans (ILLs), but this strategy also opens us up to new ways of thinking about future collaboration.

## **The Times They are a-Changing**

Things are moving quickly nowadays. We see:

- Changes in the ways patrons seek information (well, this is not exactly new, but): Google, Amazon...
- Changes in expectations: What do our patrons expect from the Library?



- Changes in ways of studying (lifelong learning)
- Changes in the ways research is being done (more cooperation and interdisciplinary work)
- Changes in the ways researchers publish
- Changes in the Library's framework conditions
- Digital educational resources (DLR vs. OER)
- From building collections (buying books) to short term loans (STLs) and patron/demand driven acquisition (PDA/DDA)
- Digital resources (licensing terms) challenge the ILL tradition, and thus also one of the major ideas in the library sector—that resources are to be shared freely, to the benefit of the patron. The licensing terms of the large publishers prohibits ILLs of digital books.



Some of the systems and resources the library manages and administers.

## What Needs to Change?

What are the demands on the future libraries and library staff? What skills do we as librarians need? What services should we provide? For several years now statistics have shown that perhaps we do not deliver the right services. The focus

has shifted. The number of physical book loans is decreasing, and the same goes for the number of visitors. It is high time to move away from the book museum/book storage idea towards a more open space and to offer a variety of (new) services to our patrons. Perhaps we should look to the public library sector. According to the revised Public Libraries Act of Norway that came into force in 2014 public libraries shall:

“...promote the spread of information, education and other cultural activities through active dissemination and by making books and other media available for the free use of all the inhabitants of Norway. Public libraries are to be an independent meeting place and arena for public discussions and debates.”[5]

We as a library need to think more about how to use our resources more effectively.

We need to:

- Learn how to work more strategically
- Revise and update our collection policy (both acquisition and weeding)
- Evaluate and make better use of our resources based on the available data
- Make better use of the library space
- Grow the librarians' skills to meet today's and tomorrow's needs

## Collection Policy: Weeding and Acquisition

Printed book collections take up space. And space costs. When it boils down to numbers and limited resources, our usage statistics clearly indicate that we need to evaluate and change the way we think about our physical collections:

Weeding: 77255 out of 103514 physical items have not been borrowed in the last seven years, and 12158 items have been checked out once. That points to 89413 titles (or 86% of the collections) not being relevant. We also pulled some circulation statistics for 2021 from our database, looking at the years 2019, 2020,

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[5] Translation found on the IFLA Library Buildings & Equipment Section Blog (Somy 2017).

2021. Less than 20% of the books purchased during these three years were borrowed. 292 of these 3589 titles were on the students' reading lists. As in other HE libraries, the number of physical book loans continues to decrease year by year.

But when it comes to such library collections: How do you weed? Are they to be weeded? Are there any alternatives?

We as a library need to think more about how to use our resources more effectively.

Acquisition: With 80% of the books purchased during the period 2019-2021 not being borrowed in 2021, it is clear that something must change. The time and money spent on acquisitions could (and should) be put to better use. There is no subject librarian in our staff, and the library does not have a committee with faculty members taking an active part in the development of the library collections.

## **New Trends and New Skills for Academic Librarians**

We as librarians need to future-proof our skills. In addition to our traditional competencies within cataloguing, classifying, metadata, and digital literacy, we need to:

- Learn how to work more strategically
- Develop our didactic competencies
- Develop our expertise to support research in a digital world, and digital information management
- Collaborate within and outside of the institution (developing our networking skills)
- Learn how to market our content and services better
- Learn how to host and manage events
- Be able to influence and negotiate within the institution

## **The Future MF Library**

### **Expectations and New Services**

Let us begin with some of the expectations on the future MF library:

- Less physical, more digital services
- Services and patrons in focus
- Make our services visible and accessible
- Lifelong learning
- Digital transformation
- Data-driven service development
- Open science
- Pedagogical innovation
- Economy and financial models
- Competition
- Virtual research environment
- Create a stimulating learning environment for our students
- Academic publishing (open access, open science)
- Curate historical archives (digitization, cultural heritage)
- Curate/host events
- Provide services to new student groups, and external user groups

With these expectations of the Norwegian HE library in the future, new tasks must follow suit. But which ones? One thing is certain: The Library needs to seize the moment and take the space. We must make our competencies and contributions visible. The library and the educational landscape are changing very quickly, and there is a wide array of new services we should develop. The future is bright, but it is work-intensive.

## The Library Space

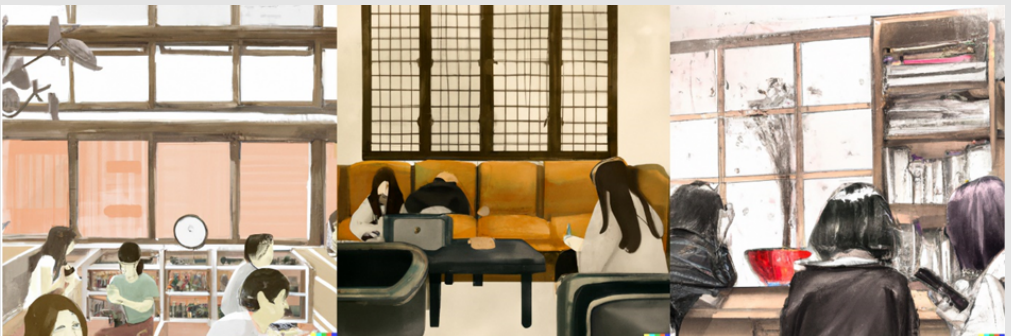


Image created using labs.openai.com (DALLE) asking for “students cozy hangout in the library with sofas and deep armchairs japanese painting style”.

Beginning with the library space: We want to bring in the students. The library room should be their home on campus, a warm, welcoming space. A place where they can study, but also relax – perhaps even take a nap on the sofa now and then? We want sofas, coffee tables, and places where you can hide away, but also do group work. And what about providing a maker space, a place to be creative? We need to dive into the field of user design: How do our students perceive the library? What do they want and need?

The MF Library has just embarked on a 3-year project preparing for access to the library outside ordinary opening hours. During these unstaffed hours, the library will be self-service only, and registered patrons will be able to access it with their library card, check out books, and use the facilities.

We aim for fewer books and fewer shelves. Our library space today is crowded with (little used) books, and not very attractive. We need to open up and make room for our students and the interested public – to be a vital hub. The MF library should host relevant events on a regular basis: Book talks, research talks, concerts, poetry readings, and small exhibitions. The Norwegian national library strategy 2020-2023 states: “It is a goal that the premises of research libraries be used to strengthen the dissemination activities (e.g. through events, exhibitions, and similar) where this is possible”.<sup>[7]</sup> Here we have a lot to learn from the public libraries.

Reference desk, goodbye. The reference desk is not a particularly well-suited place for helping with complex research questions. There are other and better ways of doing this. Patrons can always book an appointment with a librarian, chat, make a phone call, or send an e-mail. In addition, we need to develop LibGuides, nano tutorials, and FAQs so that patrons can easily find answers to their questions when searching for information. This will also accommodate our patrons working remotely, and make our resources more accessible to a general audience. We will install a self-service lending/returning machine for our printed materials. This will also free a substantial amount of time for the librarians that can be better used on developing new emerging services.

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[6] *Demokrati og dannelse: Nasjonal bibliotekstrategi 2020-2023* 2019, 21

The reference desk area can then be reshaped to accommodate other services our students need: the student reception could move in; our designated exhibition space can be better used. Perhaps we could have a small coffee bar here? It would all fit in well with the other student services in our story: student chaplains, student IT support, our writing centre, and the Student Council offices. Perhaps this is where we could set up a maker space?

## The Collections

We are preparing for some radical changes in our acquisition routines: instead of our old focus on active purchases and collection building, we will move toward STL and PDA/DDA solutions. We are changing our book-buying policies, moving substantial sums from our budgets to these solutions. This new way of providing literature for our patrons (what they request, when they need it) will be a huge time-saving measurement for the library. In most cases, our patrons will not need the help of a librarian to access materials (only if there are technical problems, or if the physical book is stored in our stacks).

We will still purchase physical items when needed, such as materials on our students' reading lists. This new policy will also (hopefully) dramatically reduce our dependence on inter-library loans, a service that is both expensive and time-consuming.

This shift in acquisition and collection policies will also make it possible to rethink the use of the library's physical premises as mentioned above. The Norwegian Act on Public Libraries of 1985 went through a major revision in 2013. A public library must now also be "an independent meeting place and venue for public conversation and debate". This puts new demands on the interior design plans for the library room, and it also puts the printed collections under pressure. The Norwegian National library strategy 2020-2023 emphasises that HE libraries must follow suit: "In addition to serving researchers and students, academic and research libraries help to fulfill the universities' and university colleges' statutory mission to disseminate information to the general public," and how these libraries should "utilise the new opportunities and tools to reach out to society in general. Academic and research libraries should be 'knowledge centres' for the entire population".[7]

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[7] *Demokrati og dannelse: Nasjonal bibliotekstrategi 2020-2023* 2019, 21

## **New Services, New Patron Groups?**

According to the updated Act relating to universities and university colleges § 1-3 letter d, universities and university colleges shall “contribute to lifelong learning and provide continuing education and training”.<sup>[8]</sup>

So, following up on the signals from the government, and from our own institution: what new patrons should we provide services to? On what level? And what are their needs?

There are several different user groups to consider: employees of the Church of Norway, students in joint programmes with other institutions, students studying remotely, and the general interested public. What services do these user groups need? As a library, we should provide new and old patrons with online tools to help them discover our resources and services. We need to find ways to inform about and facilitate usage. With the emergence of open science and open access, the library can of course mediate open access resources. We can also make our tutorials available to everyone online. And we can open our physical space up with programmes as mentioned above. We will also continue to be an active partner in the national and international inter-library loan system, as far as possible.

However with more and more resources being purchased in digital form, or giving access to our main patrons via STL, the restrictions put on us by the publishers prohibit sharing with external users. This is a problem that has to be addressed higher up in the system, by Sikt (the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research) together with UHR-Library (the National Strategic Unit of Universities Norway).

We will also work on curating our special collections of archival materials, digitising and exhibiting them online to a broader audience.

## **Teaching Support**

In cooperation with our writing centre, the library will continue to build our teaching resources when it comes to topics such as academic integrity, information literacy, and plagiarism, and provide support for the teachers in preparing their

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[8] *Universitets- og høyskoleloven 2005.*

reading lists and digital course packs (compendia) for the students. We also see that there is a need for strengthening the library's teaching programme in accordance with the information literacy framework for higher education.

## Research Support



*Image created using labs.openai.com (DALLE) asking for “theological educational library as a virtual research environment”*

Together with our institution's IT department and the Division of Academic Affairs, the library should play a key role in building a strong virtual research environment for our researchers and postgraduate students.

Expert knowledge is needed to support our researchers within all areas of open science: licenses and immaterial rights, APC agreements, digitisation, Plan S, transformative agreements, and the emerging question about institutional right retention strategies. Open access costs are high, and we see a shift in spending from journal subscriptions to paying article processing charges. Partially, as a result of this, the library now sits within the Division of Academic Affairs. And with these new areas come new tasks for the library: data stewardship, interoperable metadata, the FAIR principles.

Then there is the question of publishing services: MF publishes three journals, two of which are peer-reviewed (Norwegian Journal of Missiology and Nordic Journal of Practical Theology), both using the OJS platform, and a trade journal, Luthersk Kirketidende (the Lutheran Church Journal), with 16 issues a year. Will the Library assist in some ways here? As of today, we help out with questions about funding, DOIs, criteria for being a true OA-journal, how to be registered in different databases and collections, and so on.



These are just some of our thoughts and divinations about the future MF-Library. Who knows what the future will hold? The only thing certain is that we will face big changes. By trying to envision some of them, perhaps we will be better prepared. And if we do not embrace change, then what?

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## From Collections to Connections: Theological Materials in Finnish University Libraries

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### **Introduction**

The current Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki is the direct descendent of the faculty founded in Åbo (Turku) as part of the Royal Academy in 1640. In 1829, after the great fire in Åbo, it became part of the University of Helsinki. The seminary library of the faculty became later the Theology Library, which, in turn, was integrated into the Helsinki University Library, when all big and small libraries of humanities and social sciences were brought under the same roof in 2012. Back then, the collection of the Theology Library included about 90,000 volumes, while the total collection of the new library amounted to approximately 1 million volumes. The classification system was left intact. The printed collections were reduced by removing a great number of duplicate copies. In practice, however, this kind of one-copy-only politics as a guideline for unifying the collections could not be realised without significant compromises. Thus in Helsinki, there is one library for humanities, law, education, and social sciences, and the collection of the former Theology Library has become a part of it; instead of a theological collection, we must rather talk about theological materials, which are intertwined with other materials of the Library.

The School of Theology at the University of Eastern Finland consists of two study programmes: Western (mainly Lutheran) Theology and Orthodox Theology. It was preceded by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Joensuu (2002– 2009). The theological collection of the university is mainly located in the Joensuu Campus Library, which was founded in 1969. Theologians have never had a separate Faculty library in Joensuu; it has always been a part of the main library, the signum system of which is based on the Finnish version of UDC. In the Joensuu campus Library, the theological collection is located in the same facilities as the collections of humanities, philosophy and social sciences.

As UEF offers studies in both Orthodox and Lutheran theology, the library's collections must meet the needs of both disciplines. The original core of the theological collection consists of collections received from the Finnish Orthodox Seminary in 1988, the Finnish Orthodox Public Library in 1993, and the Finnish Archbishop Johannes in 2000. Therefore, the theological collection contained predominantly Orthodox material until the university started to offer education also in Western theology in 1997, which increased the acquisition of Lutheran studies significantly. Since then, maintaining the balance between Western and Orthodox material has been one of the library's special tasks.[1]

## **Our Concept of Collections is Changing Dramatically**

Before the turn of the millennium, the collections of the university libraries as well as theological seminaries and faculties consisted of mainly printed books, journals, and microfilms, but also included some CD-Roms. In the past two decades, however, most journals have become electronic; e-books are preferred to printed books, which are sold in large packages so that one book costs about 20 cents per year. (We also see a move away from traditional/permanent collections: libraries do not own their books but rent them.) Great thematic databases have outdated most collections of old books; national libraries and other institutions in Europe and elsewhere have digitised their cultural heritage and made much of their collections openly accessible. This Open Access movement has been fruitful in promoting modern scientific work openly

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[1] We are thankful for our colleagues in Joensuu and Helsinki for the information and insight they have provided: Kaarina Meriläinen and Mikko Meriläinen (Joensuu), Seija Karvanen, Marjo Kuusela, Kaisu Leinonen and Juha Leppämäki (Helsinki).

accessible for everybody. These developments have revolutionised all libraries, including those serving scholars and students in various fields of theological studies.

In 2012, when Helsinki University Library was recreated in the Kaisa House, the digital revolution of collections in the field of humanities and theology was only just beginning. It had, among other things, a display area for recent acquisitions of printed books in the lobby. On the seventh floor of the building, there was a large area for printed journals. Some five years later, both areas had shrunk into a tiny space and become almost unnoticed. As the space costs are growing and e-books are bought in masses, the printed collection that is still preferred by a minority of users – particularly those specialising in classical studies – is slowly diminishing.

The same dramatical change can be seen in UEF Library collections as well. When the union of Joensuu and Kuopio University Libraries was established in 2010, both students and scholars of Theology preferred print books and avoided using e-books if possible. In ten years, e-books have become the dominant form in book acquisitions, and customers have understood the advantages of accessing e-books remotely. In addition, the amount of subscribed print journals has decreased significantly.

The Helsinki and Joensuu University libraries prefer to rent e-books in bulk packages. At the same time, the continuing rise of operational costs has led to space problems with traditional printed collections, and both libraries are in the process of dramatically reducing these. The books removed from the collections are sent to the National Repository Library in Kuopio, from which loans can be delivered quickly. The articles are delivered in digital form (pdf), and the circulation of the printed books is also smooth. The main bulk of the repository collections consists of scientific books from the 1970s to the 1990s. This is a functional system both for the libraries and the customers.

As a result, the National Repository Library is slowly becoming the central library for printed books. However, there is a challenge of how to make the existence of these collections better known to customers and how to make borrowing from it an uncomplicated process, so that the National Repository Library becomes a seamless extension of the libraries' own printed collections.

As for the great university libraries, we cannot talk any more about 'a collection' and even less about specific collections. Therefore, it is hard to estimate which

materials of the university library belong to the realm of theology, and such information and all ensuing statistics, which were ingrained in the life of traditional theology libraries, have become ridiculous. E-books are a particularly striking example. Now that e-books are mostly bought in packages, which change in composition and subject weighting all the time, we can only talk about materials that serve the whole academic community. The openly available digital libraries such as Internet Archive, Gallica, and institutional repository portals such as Core (COnnecting REpositories; The Open University, United Kingdom) and Base (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine; Universität Bielefeld) are beyond our concept of individual or specific themed collections. Now the challenge for librarians is to make all these great resources known to scholars and students.

Furthermore, the concept of so-called 'collection policy' has become problematic: can we as subject librarians decide this since a collection does not exist anymore? In the past, we used to discuss the qualitative criteria for our printed collections, but now the sheer volume of journals, books and databases has taken the lead. In many university libraries (in Helsinki, but not in Joensuu), patron-driven acquisition (PDA) has become a favoured model of library collection development, particularly for e-book collections. Scholars use the offered materials according to their present needs, and those materials which remain unused drop out of the package offered by the provider, without a librarian's curation. In Helsinki and Joensuu, we also use a so-called e-form, which enables scholars to order books that they need. For some years, it has been customary to order, as far as possible, all requests as e-books. In past years, theologians have annually made some 13% of all the proposals (which amount to about 3000 requests); they seem to be slightly more active than their colleagues on average are. It is evident that more active scholars profit from this service, potentially at others' cost.

As the e-book has taken over the market of scholarly literature, so too the space costs of our libraries are rising significantly. We feel pressured to move towards a full digital library without any printed books at all. This development will be slow and not completely inevitable; some of our customers insist on having printed collections.

In 2020, a great number of Finnish academic libraries – including our libraries in Helsinki and Joensuu – have introduced Alma, a novel service platform, which greatly improves on local digital catalogues. On the new platform, all search terms

produce results from available web materials in comparison to the printed materials preserved on library shelves. These web materials mostly belong to databases purchased by the library, but the Alma platform also harvests some results from Open access databases in the net.

## Acquisition Challenges

In the university libraries of Helsinki and Joensuu, much of the materials that serve the research, education, and study of theology are acquired independently of the efforts of the subject librarian. In the case of PDA, the subject librarian has become one of the clients: s/he can always join in and influence the content of the database by choosing and using books.

University libraries buy journals in large packages, and it is difficult to avoid overlaps between the fixed packages that are offered. In these take-it-or-leave-it situations, librarians specialised in acquisition deals always have the chance of dispensing with one particular deal and ordering the non-overlapping journals separately, but this is always the much more expensive option than taking packages and ending up with double (or triple) for several journals. Furthermore, increasing subscription costs have a negative impact on collection development; if the library wants to subscribe to a new resource, it often has to dispense with something else.

For theological journals, AtlaSerials is the single most important – and thus indispensable – database. However, more than a third of these journals are also included in deals that are made with other companies, particularly with EBSCO – which, in turn, is even more problematic because Atlas is an EBSCO database. The advantage of AtlaSerials is in its wealth of materials and archives that date back to the earliest issues, so is still worthwhile, even allowing for duplication.

As regards journal databases, a special challenge to the UEF Library is that the School of Theology is significantly smaller than the Faculty of Theology in Helsinki; there are approximately 470 graduate students of Theology and 75 postgraduate students at UEF. The Faculty in Helsinki has a total of nearly 1,500 undergraduate and postgraduate students; around 150 Masters of Theology and some 15 Doctors of Theology or Doctors of Philosophy graduate from the Faculty every year. The teaching and research staff numbers in Helsinki Faculty are around 100. Because of this, the number of potential users of, for example, Acta Sanctorum, Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, or Luther's Werke in digital format, is smaller in UEF than in Helsinki University. A smaller library has more pressure for deciding which ones of

many expensive databases are worth subscribing to; but even if AtlaSerials does not belong to the most used databases at the library, it is necessary for students and researchers of theology.

Another question concerns drawing the line between ecclesiastic/confessional and scholarly publications in acquisition policy. University libraries focus their collection policies on academic research. Theological libraries contain publications that are not research but research material: Holy Scriptures, catechisms, ecclesiastic pamphlets, sermons, etc.; it is not always easy to decide what should be included in the collection. However, as the Finnish Ministry of Education has defined the education of Orthodox theologians as one of the national special tasks of UEF, the library seeks to acquire for its collection practically everything that concerns the Orthodox Church, even if the amount of Orthodox theologians is quite small compared with students and researchers of Western theology.

## **Keeping the Scholarly Community up to Date**

The development of digital library collections, open access publications, scholarly web pages, and various social media platforms have made it difficult for scholars to be aware of all sources of information relevant to their scholarship. As in many other fields of study, scholars studying theology often rely on their social networks, Google Books, academia.edu, ResearchGate and other Internet platforms. For a subject librarian, it is often challenging to easily inform them of Open Access journals and books, institutional repositories, and various materials digitised by national libraries and other institutions around the world.

Since autumn 2019, the Faculty of Theology in Helsinki has stopped using e-mail postings to all staff and moved all communication to a web page. This makes it difficult for the subject librarian to provide the faculty members with direct information about new acquisitions, database trials and other matters. UEF Library has similar challenges: e-mail posting is not a desirable form of communication, and it is uncertain how much time staff have for reading Library homepages and blog postings without a prompt. An intermediate form of this is social media-like platforms like Yammer, where it is possible to provide information both to the intrafaculty group and the library group, which many theologians follow.

We are concerned about how to keep the university community up to date, but also how to reach other theologians such as Lutheran and Orthodox priests, teachers,

and church musicians, who would like to utilise university library collections in their work. In Finland, university libraries provide their services not only to the scholarly community, but also to all citizens: libraries are open to all and anyone can get a library card without being a student, lecturer, or researcher, and every citizen can use our information service. There is, however, one problem: all customers can borrow print books, but remote access to e-articles and e-books is available only to university students and staff; other people can use them only in the library. From this point of view, the transition from printed collections to the electronic library has led to inequality. One solution to this problem is to give information about open access publications on library homepages.

Not only has the concept of the collection become obscured, but library services have also experienced a change as well. It was easy for a researcher to perceive traditional library services such as collection services, customer services, and publishing services. Now the services offered by the library also comprise information retrieval instruction and courses, support for research visibility and research evaluation, parallel publishing, research data management, and so on. This diversity of services raises the question of the role of the subject librarian. Traditionally, a subject librarian has been seen as an expert and administrator of collections in his/her field, and he/she was expected to attend to all services relating to his specific area. However, this role of 'jack-of-all-trades' becomes near impossible, especially when digital services provided to researchers require more and more specific expertise. What matters, ultimately, is being reachable; students and scholars must know who to approach when it comes to questions about printed and electronic collections.

## **Questions about the Future**

Is this the future of European theology libraries? Will they be integrated into university libraries? Will they lose their collections and start to build up connections instead?

When theological libraries become more and more digital, will it become an attractive option to create networks of individual theological libraries that share the costs of all toll access materials they use?

Will theological libraries become more and more digital spaces without printed books (like UCL in London)?

What will be the role of the subject librarian? How could we be prepared for a change? How could we master the future of our profession?



## Dreams to ignite the Spirit: The Strategic Plan of EKE, the Hungarian Association Libraries

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### Introduction

The 50th anniversary meeting of BETH – held in Rolduc, the Netherlands, in 2022 – commemorated the existence of the Association both by looking back on its history and by envisioning a future based on the individual, progressive storylines of its member libraries. The conference thus served as a motivation for the Hungarian Association to look into the future and define key areas with well-defined milestones toward which we should focus our attention and channel our joint efforts.

This strategic plan took half a year to crystalise. It was based on the brainstorming sessions, discussions, and debates of six librarians, each with a leading role in their own ecclesiastical library, and other experts in particular subfields, as will be discussed. All the main denominations of the Hungarian Association were represented in this working group.[1]

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[1] Members of the group: Ágnes Bálint (The Theological and College Library of the Transtibiscan Reformed Church District, Debrecen), Ferenc Balogh (Library of the Archdiocese of Eger), Ildikó Kövécs (Theological Library of Gál Ferenc University), Kornélia Mészáros (Library of the Lutheran Theological University), Balázs Tamási (Jewish Jewish Theological Seminary – University of Jewish Studies, Budapest), Török Beáta (Library of the Sapientia College of Theology of Religious Orders, Budapest).

Imagining ourselves in five, ten or twenty-five years seemed at first impossible to accomplish with any accuracy or credibility, because of the serious uncertainties of the present and the sudden changes of the recent past. For example, the Russian invasion of Ukraine means that we are now neighbouring a country at war. As a consequence, increased energy and product prices are affecting individual households, as well as companies and institutions. A considerable rise in the price of paper negatively affects the Hungarian book market: it is increasingly difficult to purchase books and journals, and almost impossible to continue scientific publishing in our libraries. As for the international market, the acquisition of books, journals, and databases is unsustainable due to the exchange rate of our national currency, the Hungarian Forint. We could list many more factors that have made it difficult to predict even our near future. Who would have thought that we would not be able to meet, travel, or have conferences for almost two years? Who would have imagined a world with closed institutions, schools and libraries, or a working environment dominated almost totally by the 'home office'? Who would have imagined that distance education, digital libraries and online services would almost totally take over traditional library items and services? And what further consequences will these phenomena have?

The case study/example of the Library of the Lutheran Theological University supplies an answer to these questions. From March 2020, the staff of the University were obliged to work from home. The academic years of 2020 and 2021 ended and/or started online, and the library was only reopened in February 2022. This meant that three full university year groups began their studies online.[2] Taking advantage of the situation, the librarians prepared a library development plan during the autumn of 2020. The aim was to prepare for nonstop (day and night) opening hours, in keeping with a long-standing wish of both students and teaching staff. To achieve this, renovations were carried out in the library building during the autumn of 2021. After almost two years of online studies, with half of the students hardly ever having visited the library or met the librarians, the library was reopened with serious doubts as to whether students, now conditioned for online learning

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[2] Those who started in September 2019 are also included here due to the lower library usage of first-year students in their first semester.

environments, would want to visit the library and borrow physical items at all. If anyone had predicted that they would come and borrow materials almost every night, on weekends and during the summer library holidays as well, one would have certainly felt that their prediction was exaggerated. But this was, in fact, what happened. The first 'visitors' on the opening night were students from the first year!

On Maslow's well-known pyramid conceptualizing the hierarchy of needs, the services that libraries provide are mostly at the top of the pyramid.[3] These are needs that point towards growth and self-actualisation. These cognitive and self-actualisation needs consist of the following: knowledge, understanding, cognition, motivation to learn, creativity, personal development, and sense of purpose. In the current situation, with the majority of the population increasingly concerned with basic subsistence, is there enough time, energy, and need to focus on the higher levels of the pyramid? How well can we assess what lies ahead in a few years (or even decades)? The task is not an easy one, but we believe there should always be goals, plans, dreams, and aspirations that inspire individual librarians and the community of librarianship as well.

Maslow's pyramid rightfully assesses the same thing that an old saying expresses as follows: "You can't think on an empty stomach!" To address more layers of the pyramid, our Associations' strategic objectives will be presented in the form of a satisfying menu.

## **Starter: Aubergine Cream with Toast - Easy to Prepare, Easy to Digest**

A lighter, simpler dish to whet the appetite. These objectives are rooted in our existing resources, in collaboration within the Association's member libraries, and on building new relationships.

1. To achieve a 98% completion of electronic cataloguing of existing collections.

The prevalence of retrospective electronic cataloging is quite varied in our member libraries. We have some libraries with 100% completion, but others have much lower figures. The Library of the Lutheran Theological University, for example, is

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[3] Steven Webber, "Look to Maslow's Hierarchy to See Design an Architecture Impacts," Design for Purpose, September 10, 2019, <https://www.iands.design/interior-design-educators-council-idec/article/10168507/look-to-maslows-hierarchy-to-see-design-and-architecture-impacts>.

is 70% complete. The work is in progress, but the library is understaffed – something many of our libraries have in common. Thus, an achievement of 98% is still a challenge in Hungary, but we think that it can be achieved within five years. We do not propose 100%; 2% is left both as a nod to humility, and to account for items in circulation or missing, etc. The Association's renewed union catalogue, where the holdings of all our member libraries will be searchable together, will also help with and motivate us towards the achievement of this goal. The union catalogue will support the exchange of bibliographic data across libraries and library systems, which can accelerate cataloging. Cooperation with universities where librarianship courses are offered could also be helpful: we can provide practical training for students, or even volunteers who, in exchange, contribute to our cataloguing effort. Within the Association, we plan to develop a common cataloging policy to make the exchange even smoother.

2. To elaborate the principles and practice of acquisition harmonisation among libraries..

In this area, the strain is the scarcity of funds and the responsibility of good management of those funds. The idea is to diminish multiple acquisitions of very expensive items and to operate an effective interlibrary loan instead. It builds on intensive joint work, collegial relationships, and responsible management. Member libraries will be expected to make the bibliographic description of the books they have already ordered and to upload them into the union catalogue. In this way, readers can find out whether the item they are looking for will soon be available in a member library. It could also serve a useful function for other libraries and librarians looking to rationalise their acquisitions. This is particularly useful for more expensive documents and those that are likely to be rarely used as they focus on a special area not widely researched in our institutions.

## **Soup: Vegetable Soup with Vermicelli - Do Quick Fixes Work?**

This dish gives an overview of the situation of librarianship in Hungary. If a Hungarian soup is rich enough, it can be a proper main course, like goulash, for example. But this soup is simpler, consisting of water, stock cubes, and vermicelli. It is quick to prepare, but only gives a temporary feeling of fullness. The current situation of Hungarian librarianship is similar. Librarians still exist and libraries

have not been closed, but the rich fulfillment – that is, the long-term solution as to the survival of the profession – is uncertain. Hence, our strategic goals include the following point.

1. To advocate for a better social appreciation of our profession and to address the shortage of young professionals and recruitment issues.

Today there are nearly 3,900 libraries (including branch libraries) in Hungary, and the Association of Ecclesiastical Libraries has 59 member libraries. However, the number of young people choosing the librarian profession is decreasing. According to graduate career tracking data, 174 people graduated from library bachelor's degree courses nationwide in 2013-2014; in contrast, this number fell to 56 in 2018. Moreover, graduates do not necessarily look for librarian positions, preferring other jobs. 43.75% of graduates entered the business sector, presumably working in a non-library field. It is also more difficult to hire new staff in rural areas than in the capital. According to 2019 data, nearly half (43%) of graduates with a library bachelor's degree found employment in or around Budapest.

As a profession, librarianship is not well rewarded, either financially[4] or socially.[5] No wonder, then, that there are so many career dropouts undertaking other jobs. 76.78% of graduates work (19.64% work during their studies), and only 16.07% continue to pursue MA studies.[6] In many cases, librarians are forced to take part-time jobs in addition to their full-time jobs (especially if they are the only or primary breadwinners). Today, in Hungary, the average gross monthly income of a librarian is 861.30 EUR (350,000 HUF), while the net salary is 572.80 EUR (232,750 HUF).[7]

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[4] "Diplomás Pályakövetési Rendszer 2020: Adminisztratív Adatbázisok Egyesítése - Gyorsjelentés," Diplomás Pályakövetési Rendszer, 2020, [https://www.diplomantul.hu/storage/DPR\\_AAE\\_2020\\_gyorsjelentes.pdf](https://www.diplomantul.hu/storage/DPR_AAE_2020_gyorsjelentes.pdf).

[5] Recently a municipality advertised a job vacancy for "librarian and cleaner" from <https://kozigallas.gov.hu/pages/jobviewer.aspx?ID=ij3e3zdvd7>.

[6] "Adminisztratív Adatbázisok Egyesítése 2020," Diplomán Tul, accessed September 2022, [https://www.diplomantul.hu/adminisztrativ-adatbazisok-egyesitese?fbclid=IwAR1ZNroT5IkkwWNtnqTWYql\\_tloj1PQml-z7sYd2VOJZria9MwHkLP\\_bZYU](https://www.diplomantul.hu/adminisztrativ-adatbazisok-egyesitese?fbclid=IwAR1ZNroT5IkkwWNtnqTWYql_tloj1PQml-z7sYd2VOJZria9MwHkLP_bZYU).

[7] As a comparison: the average gross monthly income of a bus driver at Budapest Transport Centre: 1602,4 EUR (651,183 HUF), the net salary 1063.10 EUR (432,000 HUF); 1kg of bread = 2.20 EUR (894 HUF). 1 Euro to 402 Forint in September 2022.

In 2022 the cultural sector received a 20% increase in salary (the figures here already reflect this). The sector severely needed a pay rise, but this is still not a proper wage settlement. Due to inflation, the real value of earnings has not increased. We currently receive the 20% raise as a salary supplement, which means that it will not necessarily be part of the salary in 2023. If it is not maintained, the number of dropouts will increase.

Continuous consultation is needed with other library organisations to confront the government ministry in charge to regulate a proper income for librarians. This is absolutely necessary in order to be able to retain staff in the profession, as well as increasing their commitment through appreciation, adequate working conditions, and opportunities for continuous training.

While the career profile of a librarian is not attractive, the quality of specialised libraries usually requires a second degree in theology or religious studies. In order to find a satisfactory solution to the recruitment issue, special training in theological librarianship, in cooperation with our theological universities, could prove very effective.

## **Main Course: Stuffed Cabbage – Full and Fulfilling But Resource-Needy**

This dish is more substantial: it is full of ambition, vision and ideas which require both cooperation and financial support.

1. Establishment of digitalisation centres and development of coordinated digitalisation plans according to the different denominations represented in the Hungarian Association.

Church libraries in Hungary digitalise primarily for the purpose of preservation, but the goal of providing theological literature no longer protected by copyright has also developed. Some higher education institutions also digitalise and provide specialised literature within the limits of copyright. In addition, the commercial digitalisation of out-of-print titles of ecclesiastical publishers (e.g. the possibility of subscribing to the database of the St Stephen's Society) is also an emerging example.[8]

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[8] See the website <https://szitkonyvek.hu/leiras/10>.

The strategic goal of the Association is to formulate the principles of a planned digitalisation to develop common recommendations (e.g., on the quality, resolution, and preservation format of documents) and resource management in order to avoid duplicate digitalisation. In the current situation (shortage of staff and financial resources), it is not to be expected that all libraries would have their own means and devices for digitalisation. For the same reasons, the Association itself cannot afford to set up a centre to digitalise on demand for its member libraries. The Association can best envisage the setting up of a digitalisation centre as a joint effort of libraries within each of the denominations. It is easier to develop a priority list of documents to be digitalised within the denomination and to agree on the distribution of tasks and joint usage of devices as a good number of libraries already own digitalisation equipment. It is easier to run a professionally competitive centre within a denomination with staff who are experts in the field. One centre, one technical background with the right professional(s), but with common goals, could strengthen relations within the denomination and the representation of the denomination.

This idea is, in fact, based on the good practice of the digitalisation centre established in the Lutheran Church of Hungary which has been operating since 2013. The centre mainly digitalises Hungarian Lutheran-related documents that are no longer protected by copyright and makes them available, free of charge, in the Hungarian Lutheran Digital Repository. The Hungarian Lutheran registers of births and deaths (a useful aid for genealogical research) are also digitised, and provided by a separate database (Őskereső), available with a subscription. The Lutheran collections define their goals jointly, drawing up the priority list together, and the service background is also jointly developed. The library of the higher education institution of the Church digitalises the literature needed for teaching purposes (in many cases, books that are no longer available from publishers but are still protected by copyright) and makes these materials available locally with limited access.

2. Creating repositories in member libraries capable of preserving content and allowing metadata to be collected into UNITAS, our Association's existing union catalogue.

For higher education libraries, there is a requirement to store certain digital

documents, or digitally created documents of authors affiliated with their institution, on their own servers. The Association encourages member libraries to create their own repositories based on this expertise, in such a way as to contribute metadata to the Association's union catalogue. For those member libraries that do not have sufficient financial/technical/professional resources, the intention is to provide the opportunity to make their digital holdings available through the UNITAS catalogue. It is also important to develop common cataloguing principles for processing this digital content.

### 3. Bridging the gap between digitalisation and the preservation of digitally born material – digital legal deposit

Today the production of printed books and journals is based on a digital master copy, so they may also be considered born-digital documents. The aim of the Association is to promote and ensure the long-term preservation of such born-digital documents of ecclesiastical publishers in Hungary. We consider the accurate approach here as well to be denominational. Churches may develop a contract with publishers associated with or maintained by their denomination for the preservation of their publishing output, and supply the documents for their future serviceability to libraries. This requires good relations and mutual trust among the parties involved. The Association is eager to initiate negotiations, clarify objectives, and assist publishers with their knowledge.

Again, a Lutheran good practice provided the idea for this objective. The Lutheran Church cooperates with the Luther Publishing House as follows: at the end of the calendar year, the publisher hands over the digital master copies of books and periodicals produced that year to the Lutheran Central Collection for preservation. The embargo period is usually 5 years, after which these materials can be made freely available in the Hungarian Lutheran Digital Repository. The transaction copies also indicate if further special copyright permission is required for serviceability.

### **Dessert: Dobos cake – layers and filling**

By transforming the theoretical, practical, and tacit knowledge already present in our collections into the library and best practice courses, we aim to create, maintain, and nurture a working ethos based on knowledge sharing and knowledge



management. In order to achieve this, we also plan to maintain the current practice of ‘neighbouring’, a form of exchange based on personal visits to ecclesiastical and secular libraries. With our culinary image, we may consider the sponge cake layers of the Dobos cake as being the professional skills of those in the field that must be kept fresh. The filling (which truly makes a good dessert) would be their continuous development.

It will be useful to differentiate between objectives requiring extra financial support and those that may be performed by means already available. We begin by listing here those means of knowledge sharing not requiring essential further financial support.

## 1. Neighbouring

The focus of these events is always on institutions that are either in the spotlight because of the documents they handle (e.g. statistical data, rare archival material), or because of the special work or improvements they have accomplished (e.g. digitalisation, library renovation, automatisisation). During visits, we are guided through the institution, meet the staff, and get acquainted with their ongoing work. Neighbouring has proved to be a means to learn about good practices, establish partnerships, and build and maintain professional contacts for the future.

## 2. One-day Conferences and Training

Organised around a topic, presentations include theoretical issues and existing practices as well. Followed by forums or panel discussions, there are always opportunities to ask questions and share thoughts and ideas on the topic. This is important for sharing good practices, but also for joining forces in finding solutions to shared problems.

## 3. Setting up working groups

In order to address special tasks such as strategy development, common cataloguing policy, etc., delegates from the member libraries work together for the duration of the project, representing different institutions and viewpoints to develop recommendations acceptable for all member libraries.

Obtaining an increase in our salaries, improving our working conditions, the development of accredited training courses with invited speakers – for instance on theological librarianship – all depend on further financial support. High-quality digitalisation of our oldest documents is connected to conservation tasks. However, it is a regrettable fact that the bookbinder and conservator professions, so much in need in the conservation-centred digitalisation process, have become untenable in recent years. It would take a national effort to re-establish training and assist all Hungarian libraries in their need.

It would be the icing on the cake if our online and offline library spaces reflect a pleasurable look and feel for our patrons, where they can get quick professional support both through the human staff and the technically secure (e.g., internet, database access) environment. This too would take financial backing and wider support.

With a heavy lunch like this, the Hungarian Association of Ecclesiastical Libraries is approaching the top of the Maslow pyramid. Hopefully, we will have enough physical and mental nourishment to really ignite the spirit of our dreams. However changeable and indefinable the future, we must cultivate our hopes and desires

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## Legacies of Enslavement Inquiry and Exhibition at Queens' College, Cambridge

**Dr Tim Eggington**

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The University of Cambridge Legacies of Enslavement inquiry was instigated in 2019, in the wake of growing public interest in the issue of British universities' historical links to enslavement.[1] Yet this story of enslavement could not be told without input from the university's colleges. It was partly with that in mind that a subsequent Queens' Governing Body meeting invited the college's librarian and historians to conduct an inquiry into Queens' College's legacies of enslavement.

Following much discussion between students and fellows, it was agreed that all interested Queens' members would participate in a wide-ranging project to examine the biographies of as many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Queens' members as possible. Given that it was not until the lockdown in March 2020 that work began, the library team drew up guidelines so that students, fellows, and librarians could do the research from home. Researchers picked names from the Cambridge Alumni Database,[2] researched them on UCL's Legacies of British Slavery database,[3] and many other similar resources, and entered their findings

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[1] University of Cambridge, "Advisory Group on Legacies of Enslavement Final Report, published September 22, 2022," <https://www.cam.ac.uk/stories/legacies-of-enslavement-inquiry>.

[2] University of Cambridge, "A Cambridge Alumni Database" accessed April 27, 2023, <https://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/>.

[3] University College London, "Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery," accessed April 27, 2023. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>.

onto a shared Google Docs spreadsheet.[4] By Autumn 2020, a coherent picture was emerging, and the library pressed ahead with its planned ‘Legacies of Enslavement’ exhibition, whilst continuing with archival and biographical enslavement research.

What had we discovered? There were in fact no big endowments relating to enslavement, nor was there anything of such symbolic significance as the slave plantation bell at St Catherine’s[5] or the Benin Bronzes at Jesus.[6] What we did find was that the college’s connections were extensive and multifarious. We discovered, for example, Peter Moncrieffe who matriculated at Queens’ in 1829 as one of the university’s first, if not the first, Black student.[7] His grandmother (called Milborough) had, it seems, been enslaved in Jamaica where Peter Moncrieffe eventually returned to become a judge and member of the Jamaican Legislative Council.[8] Peter Moncrieffe was one of hundreds of Queens’ students who progressed to careers in the empire, as merchants, planters, administrators, commentators, clerics, and much else. It seems likely that many, if not most who went to the Americas would have interacted with enslavement in some shape or form. Out of the 2,000 people who were Queens’ members between 1700 and 1833, thirty-five students have been identified whose families had actively benefitted financially from slave holdings in the Americas.[9] It seems likely that

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[4] Queens’ College Cambridge, “Legacies of Enslavement at Queens’ College: Research Data,” accessed May 15, 2023, <https://www.queensoldlibrary.org/Legacies-of-Enslavement>.

[5] St Catherine’s College, Cambridge, “Bell Continues to Support an Honest Approach to the Legacies of Enslavement,” published May 18, 2021, <https://www.caths.cam.ac.uk/slavery-exhibition>.

[6] Jesus College, Cambridge, “Jesus College Returns Benin Bronze in World First,” posted October, 27, 2021, <https://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/articles/jesus-college-returns-benin-bronze-world-first>.

[7] University College London, “Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery.”

[8] Jamaican Family Search Genealogy Research Library, “1861 Almanac: Who’s Who? In Which Is Incorporated the Jamaica Almanac,” accessed May 1, 2023, <http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Members/al61c01.htm>

[9] Queens’ College Cambridge, “Legacies of Enslavement at Queens’ College.”

there would have been more. As Fellow Commoners, these members donated library books and other gifts, and helped to finance the college through their fees, which in turn laundered their family wealth into status and career opportunities facilitated through their association with Cambridge. It was, however, as an institution whose main task was to train Anglican clerics that Queens' became most famously associated with enslavement and, of course, abolitionism.

Previous histories of Queens' College have alluded to enslavement, if at all, in relation to the college's stance in support of abolition.[10] The full picture is, perhaps inevitably, more complex, and our initial expectation was that our inquiry and exhibition would focus more fully on those who actively promoted and benefitted from the slave trade. In reality, however, the interrelated roles of abolitionism, Christianity, and more specifically, Anglicanism proved to be both unavoidable and central to our story.

Evangelical Anglicans such as William Wilberforce saw enslavement as a sin against God and Man, denying the possibility of salvation to enslaved people and placing Britain in spiritual danger.[11] Late eighteenth-century Queens' was a hotbed of evangelical Anglicanism. Its president, Isaac Milner (1750–1820), was a close friend of Wilberforce with whom he shared the same agenda for moral reform at home and abroad.[12] Just one example of their worldview can be seen in the African Institution, an organisation headed by abolitionists including Wilberforce, to which numerous Queens' members paid subscription fees, whilst others played leading roles in its affairs.[13] Following the Abolition bill of 1807,

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[10] John Twigg, *A History of Queens' College Cambridge 1448–1986* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1986), 269–70.

[11] William Wilberforce, *A letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807).

[12] Gareth Atkins, *Converting Britannia: Evangelicals and British Public Life, 1770–1840* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), Chapter 1.

[13] Queens' College Cambridge. "Legacies of Enslavement at Queens' College."

the African Institution announced its intention to promote “civilisation and happiness” in Africa as a means to “repair” “those enormous wrongs which the natives of Africa” had endured.[14] A key objective was to relocate freed slaves from the Americas to Sierra Leone on the west coast of Africa. Enthusiasts for this plan envisaged a Christian dominion with a thriving economy, under British rule, that would form a blueprint for the “civilisation” of Africa.[15]

Former Queens’ student and Fellow, Thomas Perronet Thompson, was fully signed-up to this agenda when he was appointed as crown governor of the colony in 1808.[16] Yet, the situation he encountered on his arrival offended Thompson’s sense of morality and justice. Debauchery amongst colonial administrators and the practice of selling “freed” slaves into forced “apprenticeship” seemed contrary to the African Institution’s high-minded mission. His complaints to the Government at home led to his swift removal from the post thanks to lobbying by Wilberforce who saw in Thompson an obstacle to the African Institution’s wider plan for Africa. Thompson went on to a long career as a radical MP, was a leading activist in the Anti-Corn Law League, and a commentator on issues we might nowadays consider progressive. Yet it is likely that we see at least something of his perspective on the former slaves and Africa in the words of his mentor and supporter, the abolitionist President of Queens’, Isaac Milner. He described Thompson’s Africa project as a “rational” attempt by “religious people to spread Christianity, and to civilise barbarians.”[17] Such statements reflect not only the reforming ambitions of abolitionists but also their sense of cultural superiority, a combination that serves to underline how antislavery could itself drive British imperial expansion.

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[14] African Institution, *Report of the Committee of the African Institution* (London: William Phillips and George Yard, 1807).

[15] Atkins, *Converting Britannia*, Chapter 4.

[16] Padraic X. Scanlan, *Freedom’s Debtors: British Antislavery in Sierra Leone in the Age of Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale, 2017), Chapter 4

[17] Mary Milner, *The life of Isaac Milner...Dean of Carlisle, President of Queen’s College* (London: John W. Parker, 1842) 356.

There are many further manifestations of this worldview evident in the actions of Queens' members who pursued careers overseas. One such is the remarkable career of the African-American minister, abolitionist, and African nationalist, Alexander Crummell. He graduated from Queens' in 1853 as the University's first recorded Black graduate. His ferocious criticisms of institutional discrimination against Black Americans, as well as his writings on Black self-reliance,[18] have made him one of the college's more influential alumni. It seems likely to have been, in part, the college's abolitionist reputation that attracted him to Queens' in the first place.[19] Clearly, Crummell would have opposed British imperialism in Africa, but he too was very much motivated by the idea that Africa could be civilised through exposure to Protestant Christianity and European ideas.[20]

These are some of the stories that were told through our exhibition, associated events, and the exhibition booklet.[21] During the five months it was open (October 2022–March 2023) there were over 1,400 visits to the exhibition and associated events. Visitors included school groups, students, academics, and the general public. Many engaged the curators in conversation, revisited several times, and left feedback that suggested that they appreciated the points the exhibition sought to make. An extended online version of the exhibition and its accompanying booklet is accessible via the Queens' old library website.[22] In addition, and very importantly, all the research data about college members linked to enslavement has been made available via the same website and we hope very much that this will serve as a basis for future research.[23]

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[18] Alexander Crummell, "Sermon XX, The Destined Superiority of the Negro. A Thanksgiving Discourse, 1877, Isaiah 67, 7" In *The Greatness of Christ and Other Sermons* (New York: T. Whitaker, 1882), 344-352

[19] Twigg, *A History of Queens' College Cambridge 1448–1986*, 270.

[20] Alexander Crummell, *The Duty of a Rising Christian State* (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1856).

[21] & [22] Queens' College Cambridge, "Enslavement & Salvation at Queens' College: Old Library Exhibition," accessed May 15, 2023, <https://www.queensoldlibrary.org/Exhibitions/Enslavement-Salvation>.

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## Project Omboeken: Repurposing Print Books in a 21st-Century Academic Library<sup>[1]</sup>

**Dr Michèle Meijer**

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Many university libraries have experienced a decrease in circulation numbers for their print books.<sup>[2]</sup> At the University Library of VU Amsterdam we also struggle with kilometres of books that are rarely or never used, and as a consequence are gathering dust in our stack rooms. In September 2021, we started Project Omboeken (literally ‘rebook’), which aims to give these books a second life. This paper presents the results from the first half of the project.

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[1] The present paper is a reworked version of the presentation which was given at the 50th BETH conference in Rolduc, The Netherlands. This presentation, in turn, was loosely based on the presentation “Landscaping with Books – How to Repurpose the Print Collection to Foster Community Building and Knowledge Creation” given by my colleague David Oldenhof (VU Library) about Project Omboeken at the 2022 Liber Conference (6-8 July 2022, Odense). My thanks go to David for letting me consult his excellent presentation in preparation for my BETH presentation as well as for his helpful remarks on the present paper. His reworked presentation will be published in *Liber Quarterly* (Oldenhof, forthcoming).

[2] See, for example, Dan Cohen, “The Books of College Libraries are Turning into Wallpaper,” *The Atlantic*, May 26, 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/05/college-students-arent-checking-out-books/590305/>; Leonora Crema, “From Collections to Connections: Rethinking the Print Presence and Use of Space on Campus.” In *Designing Libraries for the 21st Century*, edited by H. Thomas Hickerson, Joan K. Lippincott, and Leonora Crema, (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2022 ), 163.

The project is based on the assumption that despite the turn towards the digital, people still value print books. Little Free Libraries are popping up all over urban areas, bookshelves are deployed to give cafés or shops an intellectual ambiance or ‘living room’ feeling, and in 2021 the Netherlands saw the highest number of print books sold in ten years.[3] New public libraries, such as the Deichman Library in Oslo or Forum Groningen, are still full of bookshelves even though lending books is now only one of many facilities and programmes these libraries offer. At the VU Library, we see that students, too, like being around books. Bookcases are a recurrent element in study rooms we refurbished together with students and the study rooms that house book collections are often the busiest.

Instead of throwing away the books that have been so painstakingly collected over the years, this project aims to find ways in which these books can be of value again to students and faculty of VU Amsterdam, in both traditional ways (e.g. as sources of inspiring content) and less conventional ways (e.g. as building material for an art installation). This paper will first discuss how the project



[Image 1] Study room “The Verdieping” at the VU Library, which we designed together with students (photo By Michèle Meijer)

aims to contribute to designing spaces as “living libraries”, then describe experiments we have done thus far. I will end by presenting the challenges we experienced.

At first sight, this project might not seem relevant for theological libraries, which often consist largely of books that are still consulted regularly or must be preserved because they are old or rare. The aim of this project, however, is not

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[3] Job Jan Altena, “De cijfers over de boekenmarkt in 2021.” accessed November 26, 2022. <https://cpnb.nl/nieuws/de-cijfers-over-de-boekenmarkt-in-2021/>.

to remove books from the collection, but investigate how they can reach their full potential in contributing to an inspiring campus. Most of the books we took from the stacks so far, including those from the theological collection, were given new value as part of thematic bookshelves we placed around campus and will remain part of our collection and will remain part of our collection as books can be read and used in the traditional manner. Many of the experiments we did so far can therefore be replicated by theological libraries too.

Project Omboeken was initiated by Hilde van Wijngaarden, Head of the VU Library. Since the start of the project, about fourteen people have been involved for multiple hours or days a week, including a project leader, the heads of several library departments, metadata specialists, subject librarians, and communication and policy advisors. The project is made possible by extensive subsidies from VU-related funds, such as VUvereniging and VU Strategy.

## Living Libraries

The academic landscape has changed rapidly over the past decades. The growing number of online publications means that students and faculty turn less and less to print books and journals. In addition to content, libraries now offer other forms of support, such as data management or innovative teaching methods. They moreover facilitate interaction and interdisciplinary research collaboration between students, researchers, and library staff. [4] As a consequence, university library spaces are now designed with people rather than collections in mind.[5]

Becoming an inspiring meeting place for people, and knowledge, has been designated as a top priority in the VU Library's long-term plan, The Living

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[4] John Brosz, "Supporting the Research Experience: Creating a Hub for Interdisciplinary Collaboration." In *Designing Libraries for the 21st Century*, edited by H. Thomas Hickerson, Joan K. Lippincott, and Leonora Crema, (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2022), 355.

[5] Crema, "From Collections to Connections," 163.

Library (2021-2025).[6] Spaces will be designed as “living libraries”: spaces that have an academic ambiance but also feel like a living room, where students and faculty can find relevant literature as well as unexpected inspiration and other perspectives, and where students can study in silence but also meet peers, teachers, and researchers from different disciplines and backgrounds and create new knowledge together. With this aspiration, the VU Library aims to contribute to a vibrant social campus, which is part of the VU Strategy (2020-2025).[7] After the pandemic, the campus must be a place where students and faculty can socialise but also participate in the academic community and feel intellectually stimulated.[8] Project Omboeken centres around the potential of our little-used books to turn our spaces into living libraries and in this way contribute to a social campus.

## Ways to Repurpose Print Books

So far, we have experimented with using our little-used books to design spaces for focus and inspiration, and to create inspiring meeting places where people can feel connected to the VU, both within the library as well as elsewhere around campus. Books gain value again as part of a curated collection around a specific theme, or, less conventionally, as part of an artwork or intellectual decoration.

## Spaces for Focus and Inspiration

At the moment we are renovating the large first-floor study room adjacent to the library’s main entrance area, in which spaces for silent study and for collaboration will be combined. As a central element, we curated book collections around seven Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as Zero

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[6] University Library, “The Living Library: Long-Term Plan 2021-2025,” Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, accessed November 26, 2022. <https://vu.nl/en/about-vu/divisions/university-library/more-about/long-term-plan-2021-2025-the-living-library>.

[7] “VU Strategy 2020-2025,” Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, .accessed November 26, 2022. <https://onlinemagazine.vu.nl/vu-strategy-times-publiek-en/>.

[8] Susan Legêne, “The Campus as THE Place for Cultural Encounters and Academic Curiosity.” VU, accessed November 26, 2022, <https://onlinemagazine.vu.nl/vu-strategy-times-publiek-en/social-campus>.

Hunger, Health and Well-Being, and Gender Equality, showcasing the VU's mission to strongly contribute to the SDGs. All subject librarians contributed titles from their own collection to each of these SDG Libraries, and it was wonderful to see how many titles I could contribute from the theological collection. By being multidisciplinary, the bookcases will not only provide an inspiring environment to study, but will hopefully convey to students that relevant perspectives and solutions to global issues can come from all kinds of disciplines, including their own. After installing these SDG Libraries, the next challenge will be to find a user-friendly and aesthetically-pleasing way to link them to our e-books and e-articles on these topics. Several libraries have already found means to enable their print collection as gateway to their e-collection.[9] We are thinking of using QR-codes to link each SDG Library to interesting e-books on that topic.

The books of the SDG Libraries remain in our collection. While most of them come from the stacks and were little used, they may now become in demand again due to this new presentation. We also have books that can be completely removed from the collection and therefore can be used freely. Many of the study rooms in the library and in the other buildings on the VU campus are now devoid of books. In response to a tweet by Dan Cohen, Dean of Libraries and Professor of History at Northeastern University, about circulation numbers going down, people wondered if university libraries should keep books "for their beneficial ambience".[10] With their inspiring content and sound-deadening characteristics, the respondents claimed, they make perfect wallpaper. Such ways to recycle books will be the focus of the final year of Project Omboeken(2023). For instance, why not turn a study room into a 'Blue' or 'Green Room' by filling the walls with blue or green books? Or use books as visual cues to signal to people they are entering a library space,[11] for example by constructing arches of books around the entrances of study rooms that now show no visual connection to the library?

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[9] Examples in Crema, "From Collections to Connections," 167-68.

[10] Cohen, "The Books of College Libraries are Turning into Wallpaper"

[11] Crema, "From Collections to Connections," 166.

## Inspiring meeting places

From the beginning of the project, we envisioned a ‘living room’ in the refurbished study room, where the library can facilitate a literary and cultural programme for students and faculty. The Living Room must be a “collision space”, which facilitates the coming together of people from different disciplines and backgrounds to think creatively and forge new collaborations. [12] In other words, its design must make people feel safe but at the same time stimulate curiosity and take each other’s perspective. We hope to achieve this ambience by having a shelf with the favourite novels of the library staff as well as a bookcase with faculty staff picks. The subject librarians asked all faculty to submit a book from their disciplines which had inspired them, and which would be an interesting read for students; this initiative has already garnered a huge response. The next step will be to add a bookcase with students’ suggestions. The successful ‘Great Reads’ collection at the Walter C. Koerner Library of the University of British Columbia shows that collections curated in this way might become very popular with students and draw in new users.[13]

The SDG Libraries and the Living Room collections are examples of collections that we curated on our own initiative. In the following, I give some examples of thematic libraries that we accomplished together with different groups on campus to help them build and maintain their communities. For example, VU Pride asked the library for help in curating a queer collection next to their office, in order to make research on LGBTQIA+ topics more visible and accessible. The collection also contributes to making the area a pleasant space for their community to talk, rest, and collaborate.

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[12] Tom Hickerson, “Permeable Thinking and Design: Libraries and the Changing Knowledge Ecosystem.” In *Designing Libraries for the 21st Century*, edited by H. Thomas Hickerson, Joan K. Lippincott, and Leonora Crema (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2022), 8.

[13] Crema, “From Collections to Connections,” 170.



[Image 2] VU Pride Library (photo by Michèle Meijer)

Following the opening of the Pride library, we were asked by VU Green Office to curate a multidisciplinary collection of books on sustainability in their office space to make it more welcoming and invite visitors to expand their views on sustainability by browsing the collection.

We are now in the process of creating a third thematic library, the Mindful Library. Many universities now have facilities and programmes for mental well-being.[14] At the VU, too, students can go to the Student Well-Being Point or see a psychologist. The Mindful Library is meant as a place for contemplation, reflection, and personal growth. It will in the first place be a real library. Many students are interested in mindfulness and meditation and already practice it regularly by following in-person classes or with apps on their phones. The Mindful Library provides a space where people can broaden their knowledge about mindfulness and find the answer to questions such as: in what philosophical and religious traditions does meditation play a role? What do neuroscientists say about mindfulness? How can we explain the current 'mindfulness boom'? And what is the relation between mindfulness and yoga? To foster the building of a community of students and staff who are interested in mindfulness, we are working closely together with several partners – such as the Amsterdam student association Student Meditation, NEWconnective (a student platform about giving meaning to life), as well as those involved in the

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[14] Joan K. Lippincott, "21st-Century Libraries for Students: Learning and Belonging." In *Designing Libraries for the 21st Century*, edited by H. Thomas Hickerson, Joan K. Lippincott, and Leonora Crema (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2022), 49-50.



Buddhist chaplain training programme at the Faculty of Religion and Theology in order to offer a regular programme of guided meditations, talks, and workshops.

There are also other ways in which books can be used to contribute to an inspiring meeting place. The project also commissions art installations (partly) made from books. There have been some recent projects in The Netherlands where artists were asked to intervene in print collections that were still in high demand or needed to be preserved. [15]



[Image 3] Pantheon. 'The question is not what you look at, but what you see...' by Henk Schut (2022) (photo by Monique Kooijmans) (photo by Monique Kooijmans)

While these projects resulted in interesting new insights into these institutions' collections, we think it is also interesting to ask artists to work with books that can be used freely. Last September, we celebrated the opening of the first art installation, called Pantheon. The question is not what you look at, but what you see... by the Amsterdam-based artist Henk Schut. The installation is placed next to the auditorium, in an area where drinks receptions are held after academic ceremonies (at other times, the space is also used by students for self-study or collaboration). The title refers to The Pantheon of Humanity, an octagonal building designed by the famous Dutch architect Berlage which was never built. The installation looks like a round bookcase from the outside but inside offers a place to retreat and listen to sounds recorded on campus,

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[15] Marjo Bakker, "De kracht van verbeelding: kunstenaarsinterventies in papieren collecties," *IP. Vakblad voor Informatieprofessionals* 26, no. 6 (2022): 12-4.

including students and staff talking about their favourite books. After emerging from the installation, visitors may look at the campus with fresh eyes.

## **Social Events Around Books**

Before I turn to the challenges we encountered so far during this project, I want to give an example of the social events we organised – another part of the project, which enables us to reach out to a new groups of students. As a playful kick-off to the project, we chose to install a Little Free Library on the campus square and fill it with books from our stacks. To select the books, we organised a ‘book safari’ with students to the closed stacks where they were allowed roam about and pick out books. The students became very enthusiastic during the safari because they stumbled upon books they would never have actively searched for but which sparked their curiosity. While some of the books did have to be kept because they had recently been lent, the majority could be placed in the Little Free Library. A park bench and a quote next to it turns this space into a little reading-corner at the heart of the campus square. The library has been a success so far: the collection is dynamic and the bench has become a popular meeting place.

## **Challenges**

The responses from students and faculty to the collections, art installation, and Little Free Library that are already in place have been positive. But as in any project, we also faced (and are still facing) some challenges. At the start of the project, we needed to decide which criteria books had to meet before they could be removed from the collection. After thorough discussions and an extensive pilot we arrived at a set of criteria which the subject librarians could use to analyse their collections, for example:

- is the book being used in teaching?
- has the book been checked-out more than 3 times? (variable; to be decided by the subject librarian)
- was the last check-out less than 10 years ago? (idem)

If all questions can be answered negatively, the book is a potential candidate for deselection. We also follow the policy of the UKB, a partnership of Dutch University Libraries and The Royal Library of the Netherlands (KB), which states that a partner library may only remove a copy of a certain book if two other libraries with a copy remain.

During a pilot with 35,000 art history books, several challenges arose. We started out with an Excel file with, for each title, all the metadata necessary to answer the questions. The easy part was to trim down the list to 7,000 potential candidates by using Excel's filter function. The first challenge had to do with the fact that the availability data of the UKB libraries for the books on our removal list could only be obtained through an automatic programming interface (API). Through the API, we could get the number of times a book was available in UKB libraries, but since a library could potentially remove that book even one day later, such data quickly becomes outdated. An additional problem was posed by the fact that the logistics department can only remove 100 books from the collection per week. Since it is impossible to remove 7,000 books in one day, we had to add another check through the API at the end of the workflow. With people from different library departments involved, good coordination and planning proved to be crucial.

In addition, we found out that our metadata showing whether a book belongs to a donated collection was incomplete. Some collections have been donated under the condition that they would always remain in the collection. As a consequence, book had to be checked manually by a librarian for ex libris or other markings that say to which collection they belonged, a time-consuming task.

Another challenge was posed by the risk of removing books that were (or will be) in demand (again). To lessen the risk, the humanities librarian visually checked art history books that have been removed from the stacks so far. Another method is to search the Excel list with deselection candidates for titles that are directly relevant to the faculty's research and teaching profile or for titles written by people affiliated to the VU. This task is time-consuming and not failsafe. Therefore, budget must be reserved to buy books again.

By means of this pilot, we have established a workflow for deselection that we feel comfortable with. At the same time, we concluded that 100 books per week is not enough to carry out the plans we have for wallpaper, furniture, and artworks made from books in the final year of the project. Therefore, we started with deselecting journals, since journals often have multiple, sometimes even 100 volumes per journal, which can be removed much more efficiently.

A different challenge is how to involve the stakeholders in the project. Students and faculty may have doubts and even strong emotions, especially about the less conventional ways we want to repurpose part of the collection. It is impossible to approach a researcher for each deselection to ask whether that book can really be removed from the collection. We try, however, to keep students and staff informed about the project with a website, newsletter, and through the library's faculty liaisons. On the webpage for Pantheon, for example, we explained how the books were selected.[16] In our communication we moreover emphasise that the project is about giving our books a second life and finding a new purpose for each book.

## **Project Omboeken and Theological Libraries**

We hope that the Omboekenproject will inspire other libraries to take a fresh look at their print collections and consider how little-used books can be of value again to their communities. Instead of throwing books away after a weeding project, we believe they can be deployed to give spaces a specific ambiance. I also hoped to have shown that books that for various reasons cannot be removed from the collection can also be given new value, especially when brought in dialogue with books from other disciplines. Based on the interesting titles I could contribute from the theological collection to the

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[16] University Library, "Art Installation Pantheon by Henk Schut (2022)." Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, accessed November 26, 2022. <https://vu.nl/en/about-vu/divisions/university-library/more-about/art-installation-pantheon-by-henk-schut>

various thematic libraries, such as those on climate change and LGBTQIA+ topics, I think many theological libraries will be able to curate similar collections and show the societal relevance of theology and/or religious studies. Naturally, such collections do not need to consist of little-used books only but can be formed from books that are still in demand. Such collections can also be made in collaboration with specific communities so that the library better reflects what its communities value.

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## The Scientific Library of Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy

**Archpriest, Dr Vladyslav Fulmes**

Vice-rector of Scientific Work, Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy,  
Lutsk, Ukraine

It is hard to imagine our world without books. Books accompany a person throughout their life and are valuable sources of knowledge and information. A human personality cannot be formed without a book, and furthermore, without a book learning or carrying out scientific activity is unthinkable. Therefore, the functioning of an educational institution is not possible without a book collection.

The Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy (VOTA) (Lutsk, Ukraine) is an accredited institution of higher spiritual education of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), which prepares various types of people – future pastors of the Church of Christ, precentors of the church choir, employees of eparchial institutions and missions, specialists in the field, and those at different levels of church service and public positions related to educational, research, cultural, and administrative-consultative work – with deep knowledge of Christian doctrine, church-historical, religious and social processes, and phenomena. The Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy is the legal successor of the ancient Volyn Theological Seminary, whose history dates back to 1796. During this time, the seminary experienced various events and changed its location (Ostrog, Hanopyl, Kremenets, Zhytomyr, Lutsk). The library, which has its own interesting history, was an integral part of its functioning.

With the revival of the Volyn Theological Seminary in 1991, the Library's activity (and the collection of its holdings) restarted in Lutsk. Although the library's holdings are new compared to the previous library, the spirit and atmosphere of library work that has always filled the book collection throughout the centuries have been preserved to this day.

One of the first important contributions to the development of the library was made by Anatoly (Dublyansky) (1912–1997), Metropolitan of Paris and Western Europe and Hierarch of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in the Diaspora. He handed over about 400 volumes of theological literature, which he collected during his 50-year stay in Germany. Subsequently, in 1995, having headed the Volyn Diocese, Yakiv (Panchuk) (1931–2004), Metropolitan of Lutsk and Volyn, donated to the library a complete set of the pre-revolutionary edition of the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Brockhaus and Efron, which he acquired during his studies at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. In 1996, part of his own library was handed over by the then-Rector Petro Vintsukevich. (Among the books worth mentioning are the complete collection of works of Archbishop of Kherson Inokentiy, the first volumes of the Works of the Kyiv Theological Academy and valuable selections of theological periodicals of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.) In the mid-1990s, well-known representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora joined the formation of the library: Bishop Paisiy (Ivashchuk), Fr. Petro Satsevich, Pylyp Shaida, Ivan Popel, Serhii Lyashuk, and many others. Many books also came from the Institute of Volyn Research in Winnipeg.



[Image 1] Reprint editions: Kholm Gospel, Peresopnytsia Gospel, Mazepa's Gospel (photo by the author)



The improvement of the educational process, the activation of scientific life, and the development of the infrastructure of the theological school led to the reorganisation of Volyn Theological Seminary into Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy in 2011. This new Academy status significantly motivated the teaching staff and students to pursue scientific research work with clear objectives: to preserve the traditions of spiritual education and to bring many years of experience into the global educational and scientific space. The acquisition of 'academic' status also affected the further development of the Scientific Library: it moved to new premises; book collections have undergone changes and improved significantly; since 2012, registered funds have been introduced, the owners of which are constantly adding new books to them; an electronic catalogue (the "Ukrainian Stock House Library") and many other things were introduced.



[Image 2] Reading room of the Scientific Library of VOTA (photo by the author)

The Scientific Library of VOTA consists of a reading room and a book depository. The reading room is equipped with the necessary furniture, computers, internet and access to scientific and metric databases, such as Web of Science, Scopus, and others. On the walls of the reading room, you can view a valuable collection of church Antimins of the 19th - 20th centuries, with autographs and corresponding statutory inscriptions of many famous Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church. All books are stored in the book storage, which is equipped with state-of-the-art sliding archive cabinets purchased in Italy.

Today, the Scientific Library has more than 17,000 volumes of books and about 20,000 copies of periodicals, alphabetical and systematic catalogues are kept, compiled in accordance with the system of disciplines taught at the theological academy, in the order determined universal decimal classification. The library's entire collection is registered in four special inventory books. Each edition has its own number, which matches the number in the inventory book. The format conforms to generally accepted standards: the first (title) and seventeenth pages are stamped 'Library of Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy' and the book's inventory number is indicated.

The holdings of the Scientific Library consist not only of theological works but also items with historical, cultural, reference-encyclopedic value, and books from other areas of knowledge. Therefore, users are not only the students of the Academy, but also secular scientists, students of Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University and other higher education institutions.

The entire library is divided into more than thirty departments. The first department is devoted to theology and has many subdivisions: Christology, Hagiology, Apologetics, etc. One of the most important works in this department is Lives of the Saints, composed by St. Dimitriy, Metropolitan of Rostov. There are several paterikas: Kyiv-Pecherskiy, Volyn-Pochaiivskiy, Solovetskiy; some works of Metropolitan Ilarion (Ohienka) devoted to Hagiology, in particular,

Canonization of Saints in the Ukrainian Church and others. The next department is devoted to the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament. The Holy Scriptures are stored here in translations into Ukrainian by Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko), Metropolitan Ilarion (Ohienko) and Panteleimon Kulish, as well as translations of God's Word into many foreign languages. This department includes interpretations of the Holy Scriptures by famous fathers and theologians: Blessed Theophylact, Archbishop Averkiy (Tatushev), Oleksandr Lopukhin, Boris Gladkov, Mykola Barsov and others. The department of dogmatic theology is important and represented by many works of Orthodox theologians: Metropolitan Makarios (Bulgakov), Archbishop Filaret (Gumilevsky), Bishop Kallistus (Uer), Archpriest Mykola Malinovskiy, Metropolitan of Pergamon Ioan (Ziziulas), Archimandrite Cyril (Hovorun) and others.

One of the largest sections is dedicated to the works of the holy fathers and teachers of the Church. The creations of Saints Ioan Chrysostom, Vasyl the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Saint Ephrem the Syrian, Saints Theophan the Recluse, Ignatius Bryanchaninov, Saint Simeon the New Theologian, and others are presented here. A special place is occupied by the works of Saints Augustine Aurelius and Cyril of Alexandria in the Ukrainian language, the translation work of which was contributed by the teaching staff of VOTA. The department dedicated to homiletics and sermons is also special. Another important department belongs to liturgy and liturgical books. A special place here is occupied by liturgical literature in the Ukrainian language as well as many well-known works on the church charter. The decoration of the department is a reprinted edition of Trebnik by Petro Mohyla. The largest department is literature devoted to the history of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Thanks to the donations of Ukrainians from the diaspora, the library has almost all the works on the history of Ukrainian Orthodoxy that were published abroad. In addition, many books on this topic, which were published during the years of Ukraine's independence, were bought recently. Philosophy is a separate department. It also includes religious philosophy, psychology, and Christian ethics. Several more departments are devoted to the history of religions, the origin of Protestant denominations and their teachings, as well as art and literature.

The Library is particularly proud of the department of old prints. It has more than a hundred valuable and rare editions – mostly liturgical books – and old prints. The Floral Triodion, published on 1st June 1631, in the printing house of the Holy Dormition Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, deserves special attention. There

are also facsimile editions: the Lutsk Gospel; the Kholm Gospel; the Lavryshevsky Gospel; the Peresopnytsia Gospel; the Rheims Gospel; the Ostromir Gospels; Mazepa's Gospel; the Ostrog Bible, and others.



[Image 3] Old prints on a shelf (photo by the author)

Since the revival of the spiritual institution, a regency department has also been operating in the library. Therefore, significant space is devoted to church singing as an integral part of Orthodox worship. Over the years, a rich music archive has accumulated here. The department is rich in choral works by prominent church composers: Kyrilo Stetsenko, Maksym Berezovskiy, Artem Vedel, Mykola Leontovych, and others.

The Scientific Library of VOTA is filled not only with the main holdings already described but also with many named collections, beginning with that of Metropolitan Anatoly (Dublyansky). The following named collections have been created within or gifted to the Library: those of Metropolitan Mykhail (Zinkevich), Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabynko), the Exarch Fund of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Ukraine, Bishop of Komanskiy Mykhailo Anishchenko, Archpriest Mykola Tsap, Archpriest Volodymyr Vakin, P. Vintsukevich, M. Kuchinka, and others.

The collections are also constantly filling up with modern/new books, through donations from both readers and authors, benefactor donations, and general purchases. In particular, within the framework of the programme of support for institutions of higher spiritual education of the Union of Ukrainian Women of America, the Scientific Library of VOTA has been repeatedly replenished with new books; cooperating with the Spirit and Letter publishing house, almost all editions of this well-known publishing house are with us; every year on 23rd October, during the celebration of the Act Day of VOTA in honour of the Cathedral of Volyn Saints, the Scientific Library of VOTA is replenished with the latest scientific works and periodicals of other institutions of higher spiritual education of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine..

In February 2020, VOTA signed a ‘Memorandum on cooperation’ between the libraries of theological institutions of Ukraine (Ukrainian Catholic University, Drohobych Theological Seminary of Blessed Hieromartyrs Severyn, Vitaly and Yakym, Ivano-Frankivsk Academy of Ioan Chrysostom, Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary and Kyiv Trichoisyatytsky Theological Seminary of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church), which seeks to expand horizons and access to information. Through this cooperation, the teachers and students of VOTA have the opportunity to use publications not only from their own subject-specific library and collections but also from the holdings of all other participating scientific theological libraries. All this aids further scientific thinking and educational endeavour; which would, as said above, be impossible without books.



[Image 4] Trebnik by Petro Mohyla (photo by the author)

## The Oxford Scriptorium: Building a Reader Community at Pusey House Library

**Jessica Woodward**

Librarian, Pusey House, Oxford, UK

Pusey House Library is a reference library in the centre of Oxford, UK. It forms part of Pusey House, an independent institution founded in 1884 to keep alive the theological legacy of Oxford Movement leader Dr Edward Bouverie-Pusey (1800-1882). Pusey House offers Anglo-Catholic worship at its Chapel, while the Library and associated Archive are open to all researchers – university-affiliated or independent – who wish to learn about Anglo-Catholicism or simply to enjoy a peaceful, historic study space. The Library holds over 75,000 volumes, ranging from a 1475 incunable originally



[Image 1] Pusey House Library (image provided by its librarian)

owned by Dr Pusey to newly published monographs. The specialisms of the collection remain true to Dr Pusey's personal interests: church history, patristics, liturgy, and doctrinal theology.

The Library was once a hidden gem in Oxford, used only by a few enthusiasts 'in the know'.

Since 2018, however, the reading room has taken on a new lease of life, thanks to a group called the Oxford Scriptorium, funded by Christian charity Trinity Forum Europe. The Scriptorium is a study group, but it is also a prayer group, a source of delicious food and drink, and an opportunity for readers to make new friends. Twenty to thirty members attend every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in the university termtime. Ranging from first-year undergraduates to retirees, they follow a timetable of four independent study sessions in the Library, interspersed with social breaks (with tea and coffee provided), a free sandwich lunch, and opportunities for spiritual reflection and prayer. Structure and accountability are emphasised: at the beginning of the day, members set themselves study or research goals, and they discuss at the end of the day how far they have progressed towards reaching those goals. The atmosphere is positive, welcoming, and encouraging.

The Scriptorium concept began in ‘the Other Place’, as Cambridge is often known to Oxonians. George Seay and Dr James Orr, from Trinity Forum Europe, invited Christian graduate students to the Round Church in Cambridge to work, eat, and pray as a group, in an attempt to stave off the loneliness, stress, and lack of structure that can characterise the scholarly life. The group was named ‘Scriptorium’ after the room in a medieval monastery where monks used to write and illuminate their manuscripts. The initiative was so popular that Trinity Forum Europe decided to set up companion groups in Oxford, Edinburgh, and St Andrew’s. All have thrived through the Zoom challenges of the Covid pandemic and are still going strong. Several scholars have been members of more than one Scriptorium, finding the group to be a spiritual home in unfamiliar cities and institutions.

We count ourselves incredibly lucky that the Oxford Scriptorium have chosen Pusey House Library as their study venue. As you will see in the following testimonial from the current group leader Jack Chisnall, the Scriptorium has provided a fresh readership for the Library, many of whom might not otherwise have ventured into the secluded corridors of Pusey House. The reading room, which once housed perhaps four or five scholars a day, is now nearly full at every session. Academic networks have been forged, religious faith has been discovered, and the social side has burgeoned – last year’s cohort even participated in an Arts Festival showcasing their ‘extra-curricular’ hobbies and passions, and now there is a Pusey Drama Society consisting largely of current and former Scriptorium members. We hope that the group’s contribution to the life of the Library and House will continue for many years to come.

## Testimonial

**Jack Chisnall**

Sacristan and Scriptorium Clerk, Pusey House, Oxford, UK

The Scriptorium continues to be the coal face of Pusey House's engagement with the Oxford student community – though, by this, I mean only two things: first, it is the place we meet students 'up close and personal'; secondly, our encounter with these students yields much that sustains and energises the House. Being with them is certainly far from hard labour.

**9.20am–5.30pm**  
**Tues–Thurs in**  
**term time**

A study group which meets to nurture Christian scholars through structured work and breaks

PUSEY HOUSE **Scriptorium**



In fact, the work seems to get easier and easier, in part due to the addition of two new team members, one of whom is a medievalist who completed her DPhil while working in the study group last year. It is wonderful to see homegrown Scriptorium talent now taking on leadership roles, and they have risen to their task of feeding and watering thirty-odd students with what must surely be a Spirit-empowered initiative.

Numbers continue to rise; a juxtaposition is always highlighted to me when I see the owlish, sagacious eyes of twentieth-century Anglo-

[Image 2] Scriptorium Poster by Jack Chisnall



Catholic scholar Darwell Stone peering down from his portrait over a room full of lively discussion and laughter every lunchtime. Under such auspicious scrutiny as Revd Stone, and also the portraits of Revd Hood and Bishop Rowell, it is unsurprising that the average themes in conversation tend towards the theological; it is not uncommon to hear more than one group discuss ontology in the great scholastic writers, as if it were as natural a lunchtime topic as the weather or yesterday's test match.

Those who might be uninitiated in the Christian life certainly find their place, though, and everyone is welcome. It is even faintly flattering to me that agnostic or atheistic students attend – they must think we do something right, even if it is only the egg and cress sandwiches. And in any case, some do not remain uninitiated for long; it was a joy to watch two Scriptorium members baptised last academic year, and many more confirmed. Please pray that it continues for this next year's harvest.

## Further Reading

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## Strahov Library - Theological Hall, Philosophical Hall, (Strahovská knihovna)

**Evermod Gejza Šidlovský, O. Praem**

Director, Strahov Library, Prague, Czech Republic

The Strahov Library is the library of the Royal Canonry of Premonstratensians in Strahov, Prague. Its beginnings go back to the middle of the 12th century, when the Strahov Monastery was founded, and since several original volumes from that period have been preserved, it can be stated that the history of the Strahov Library has been continuous since then, despite all the calamities and misfortunes of war. Over the centuries, the library has had to deal with adversity many times. The fire of the monastery in the 13th century, the escape of the convent during the Hussite wars, the looting of the library by the Swedes in 1648, and the temporary expropriation of the library by the communist state gives an overview of the biggest disasters in its almost nine hundred year history.



[Image 1] Theology Hall (image provided by the author)

The lack of written sources, lost in the 15th century, means we cannot know how the book collection was stored during the Middle Ages. At the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, Abbot Johannes Lohel began systematically buying books and then proceeded to build a special 'library hall', which was completed by his successor Casper Questenberg.

This original hall was replaced in 1671 by a new one, today called the Theological Hall. The painted wooden shelves, partially transferred from the original Lohel's Hall, have survived to this day. The Theological Hall, which was built by Giovanni Domenico Orsi at the request of Abbot Jerome Hirnhaim, was also decorated with frescoes describing the rivalry between Reason and Faith by Siard Nosecký, a member of the convent, before 1727.



The second hall, today called the Philosophical Hall, was built at the end of the 18th century. Architect Ignatius Palliardi adapted the new building to the wooden interior, which was purchased by the then Abbot Wenceslas Mayer from the abolished monastery of Louka in Moravia. The fourteen-meter-high vault was decorated by the Viennese painter Franz Anton Maulbertsch with a monumental ceiling painting depicting the spiritual development of mankind. Today, over 70,000 volumes are stored in both halls, but this is only about a quarter of the book collection. Although in the earlier period the library served only the needs of the

[Image 2] Philosophical Hall (image provided by the author)

conventuals, at the end of the 18th century Strahov librarians (especially the late revivalist, philologist, expert on Czech literature, and poet Jan Gottfried Dlabač) made it available to the scientific community.

Today, the Strahov Library is both one of the most important libraries in Central Europe, due to its holdings, and one of the most beautiful in the world, due to its historical premises.

The total number of book volumes exceeds 250,000. Among them, manuscripts take the leading place, of which there are about three thousand. The oldest and most valuable manuscript is the so-called 'Strahov evangeliary'. It contains the text of the Gospels, inscribed in Tours (now France) in the years 860–865, with, a hundred years later, full-page illuminations of the Evangelists bound into it in the spirit of the Ottonian Renaissance. Its binding is also remarkable, as it bears a rich decoration that represents all three artistic styles of the Middle Ages. Beautiful in terms of design and significant in terms of content, the North Italian edition of the Arabic scholar Al-Sufi's astronomical atlas with early Renaissance depictions of the constellations from the mid-14th century. The collection of Renaissance drawings – new designs of arts and crafts objects – created by the famous painter and architect Giulio Romano and his workshop is also famous.

Jarloch's chronicle from the beginning of the 13th century is the only Czech medieval chronicle that has survived in its original form. Its author (and, in part, scribe) was the Abbot of the Premonstratensian monastery in Milevsko.. Additionally, among the wonderful manuscripts of local origin, the library also holds the Pontificale of Albert of Šternberk from 1378 and the Louka Missal from 1483.

The Strahov Old Prints (1501–1800) is a collection of books that are thematically related to basically all scientific fields. Undoubtedly, the most famous titles include a copy of the first edition of Nicolaus Copernicus's work *On the revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* (Nuremberg 1543), in which the author formulated the heliocentric theory, as well as the German edition of Andrea Vesalius's anatomical atlas *On the fabric of the human body in seven books* from the mid-16th century and *Instruments of Renewed Astronomy* (Wandsbeck 1598) of the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe with his portrait *supralibros* on green satin binding, with a dedication in his own hand and a pasted portrait.

The library staff is a small but qualified team. Librarians are dedicated not only to the processing of old book collections and new additions, both current scientific book production and newly acquired historical books, but also to making them available in the form of professional publications and other outputs. Here we can name a publicly accessible online catalogue, a printed catalogue of Strahov first prints, an inventory of illuminated manuscripts, and an inventory of book bindings, and last but not least, many scholarly articles, monographs, and catalogues which were compiled during cooperation at important domestic and foreign exhibitions. Since 1995, the Strahov Library has published 14 volumes of the almanac *Bibliotheca Strahoviensis*, which focuses on monasteriology and historical book collections. In addition to the aforementioned book collections, historic library halls and newly built or adapted depositories, the Strahov Library also manages a collection of historical maps, a collection of graphics, a picture gallery, and a monastery archive. The library also includes one of the rarest collections of historical terrestrial and astronomical globes in Czech Republic, as well as the so-called 'cabinet of curiosities', actually a small museum of natural history and archaeological finds and historical monuments, which was created at the end of the 18th century. The Strahov Library is fully involved in the *Memoria Mundi* project of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic for the digitisation of manuscripts and prints with an online output on the portal [manuscriptorium.com](http://manuscriptorium.com), as well as the digitisation of the archive funds on the portal [monasterium.net](http://monasterium.net).

In the last thirty years, both library halls have undergone a major renovation. First, the Theological Hall was restored between 1992-1994. The wooden interior was rehabilitated and restored, earlier a historical interventions were corrected and the ceiling frescoes were cleaned. In the years 2008-2010, the Philosophical Hall was completely restored with the support of Norway grants.

Now the library is open daily throughout the year from 9 am to 5 pm offering free entry to members of the religious orders and congregations and school children.

## Invitation to Feast

**Hannah L.M. Garrison**

Senior Library Assistant, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, UK

Is there anyone among you who, if your child asked for bread, would give a stone?

The Gospel of Matthew 7:9, NRSVUE

When Hannah finally found God, he was sitting outside his pub in Chelsea, whistling “Hello” by Lionel Ritchie and peeling onions.

“There you are,” Hannah said, chaffing the January cold off her hands. “The thing you gave me isn’t working and I need you to fix it. Can you fix it—er, please?”

God sniffed. He reached under the shoulder loop of his “Kiss the Cook” apron to scratch his collar bone. Then God smiled at Hannah.

“Hello to you, too, my dear,” he said, before grabbing an onion and splitting it in half with a knife.

Hannah exhaled sharply, wringing her hands. Reflexively, she rubbed the little stone she held between her fingertips, feeling its oily surface.

“Right, sorry, God,” Hannah said, then she closed her eyes. “Er—Heavenly father, hallowed be thine—”

Hannah heard God snort and then a piece of onion pelted against her forehead. She opened her eyes to see God smiling at her again, the little crow’s feet by his eyes crinkling. It was a nice smile.

“‘Hello’ is fine,” he said, turning back to his cooking. He had set up a little plank balanced between a bar stool and the pub window’s ledge, making a counter. Nearby, a cast iron pan sat on top of small propane stove.

“Now, what were you saying?” God said, tossing a pat of butter into the pan.

Hannah marveled as a baguette manifested in God’s hands. He tore off a chunk and offered it to her. She licked her lips, but ignored her growling stomach, shaking her head.

“Oh, no thank you. I don’t eat food anymore, actually. That’s why I came to talk to you.”

“Oh?” God asked, swirling the pan over the flame, the butter sliding and fizzling this way and that.

Hannah held up her hands and opened them, revealing her prized treasure.

God squinted down at it and nodded with polite interest.

“That is a very nice rock,” he said.

Hannah recoiled, bringing it back to her chest.

“No! Not a rock. It’s a philosopher’s stone. My stone. Don’t you remember? You made it for me when I asked for it.”

Before God could respond, a man walked between Hannah and God carrying a steaming plate. Hannah caught the scent of fried cheese and corn meal and clenched her jaw to keep herself from drooling.

God and the man fist bumped before the man and his arepas disappeared into the pub.

When he had gone, Hannah brought her stone back out.

“I need some help with this,” she continued. “It’s—something’s not working.”

“What’s not working?” God asked, taking the pan in hand and swirling it over the heat.

“It’s not making the elixir of life?”

“Oh, no, it is. It’s just... it’s not what I expected. It doesn’t taste very good and there are some side effects.”

“What kind of side effects?”

“Oh, well, I thought it would make me happy. But I’m not happy. I’m actually more unhappy than I used to be. I’m always worried I’ll lose my stone. So, if you could just fix me so I’m not always worried about the stone, then I think I’ll be all set. I mean, the whole reason I asked for this in the first place was so I wouldn’t have to keep bothering you. So if you—if you could just—”

It was the smell of onion and garlic that stopped Hannah's mouth.

Hannah's eyes left her stone and she watched God.

Steam rose from the cast iron pan and God swayed as he gently stirred the aromatics in the butter, the propane flames licking up the pan's iron sides.

Hannah shook her head, rousing herself in time to hear God respond.

"I can look at the stone again if you want, Hannah, but you seem hungry. Why not come inside for a bite? We're having a party soon."

As if on cue, another person, a woman wearing Doc Martens and a flannel dress, strolled into the pub. She carried a crockpot that smelled like good things: chicken, rice, scotch bonnet peppers, allspice.

Hannah reflexively swallowed. Her stomach groaned painfully. She hadn't eaten much, it was true. But she didn't need to eat. That's why she had the stone, that's why she'd asked for it. She didn't need anything or anyone except the stone.

She was hungry, though.

Hannah raised the stone to her mouth and licked the surface. It tasted like kerosene and river water.

Hannah froze, her tongue still on the stone tasting the thin layer of fluid on the surface.

She looked up. God was staring at her.

"Girl, what are you doing?" God asked, picking his wooden spoon off the ground.

Hannah tucked her tongue into her mouth and cleared her throat.

"Remember the stone makes—"

God shook his head, walked over, and took her by the elbow. He half led, half pulled her to sit on an overturned milk crate by his stove.

"I know what the stone does, Hannah. I made it, remember? You sit down and put that nasty thing away."

"B-but," Hannah stuttered.

Again, the smells of God's cooking quieted Hannah's mouth. He got to work in his pan. In with the garlic and onion went some chili flakes and a healthy splash of white wine. Then some diced tomato, anchovy, and capers.



A mini orchestra of pops and sizzles filled the air. The cooking sounds were then joined by the distant hum of laughter and 80s R&B from the pub's interior. It sounded like the party was indeed starting inside.

Hannah looked into the pub's window, the layer of condensation not quite able to hide the colors of the room: warm reds, oranges, and rich greens. She could see people inside, passing plates of curried green banana and pork shumai. A group of teenagers in school uniforms dipped French fries into bowls of red stoovflees. On the far side of the room, two white-haired men toasted with sweet mochi and mugs of mulled wine by a roaring fire.

Reflexively, Hannah shivered and hugged her arms around her middle.

"Hannah."

At the sound of her name, Hannah turned back away from the room. She realized a little late that this time she had actually started to drool and wiped her mouth on her sleeve.

God was leaning down, the little crows feet by his eyes winking into smiles. He held something out to her.

Hannah took the bowl, puttanesca over baguette.

She took a bite.

"Oh... my..."

Hannah savored the light, savory sauce. The sweet tangy tomatoes and capers and spicy garlic and chili beautiful. It was so good she wanted to cry.

In fact, she did cry a little.

"This," she sniffed, smiling. "This is better than that rock."

God nodded enthusiastically.

"You ready to go inside?" he asked.

Hannah paused mid-bite.

"You mean, go to the party?"

Hannah looked at the bowl in her hands.

"If I say yes, does that mean I have to give up my rock?"

God laughed. It was a good laugh, a full laugh.

"If you go into the party, you won't care about the rock. Why would you? Did you see those arepas?"

God pinched the fingers of his right hand and brought them to his mouth, making a little French chef kiss.

Hannah took a last bite of the puttanesca sauce and then got to her feet.

"OK."

## Quiet Day, June 2022

### St Peter in the East and Hertford chapel

**Dr Helen Steffens**

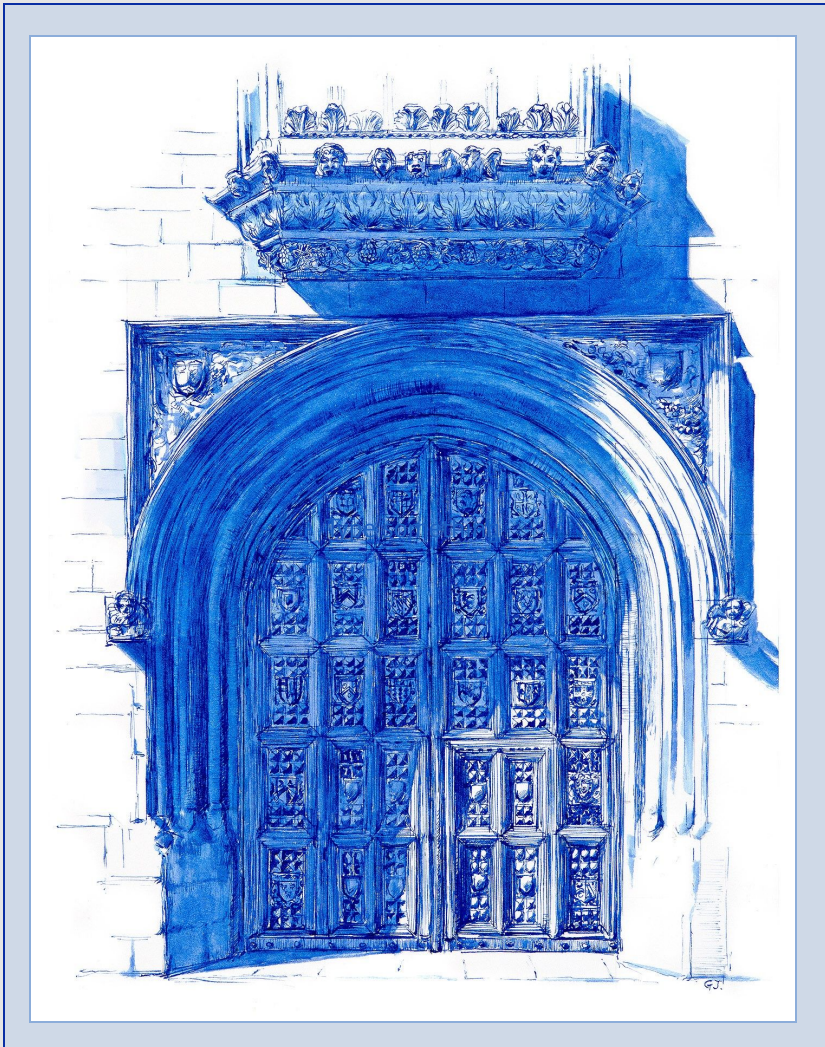
Academic Registrar, Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

In for 4, hold for 6, out for 8,  
Or in for 3 and out for 6;  
Regulate the breath and be still.  
Be still, and silent, and feel:  
Feel hot sun on closed eyelids and clasped hands;  
Then, as we descend into the chill,  
Feel the cool dim washing over us,  
Feel stones worn by worship.  
See the crypt as a pool, a well,  
But also a streamhead  
Bubbling up to refill us,  
Quietly, determinedly.  
Refreshed and renewed, we pilgrims at the East Gate  
Understand the tidal flow of goings out and comings in  
As we now meander westward.  
Suddenly, space: windows soar past panelling  
To meet the plastered ceiling far above our heads.  
Here there is light pouring in,  
Look at these windows:  
Long lead-lines, sharp corners, regularity –  
We look up, heavenward,  
Each rectangle of sky warming our bodies and souls.  
Here, too, there are undulations  
And reminders of those here before  
In each seat, each piece, carvings of flora and fauna  
(Here a bird, there a bud);  
There is nowhere The Light does not reach.

## The Old Bodleian Library Door

**Grace Jeon**

Marketing and Communications Officer,  
Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK



# Events

## Atla Annual 2023

**Location: Hilton Forth Worth, Forth Worth, Texas, USA**

**Dates: 14th June - 17th June 2023**

Atla Annual offers engaging sessions, networking with other librarians and scholars in the field of religion & theology, and meeting with vendors to support your library and research needs. It will be held in Fort Worth, Texas, from June 14-17, 2023, for a hybrid event with multiple onsite & online options.



Atla is excited to announce Emily Drabinski and Dr. Walter Earl Fluker as the plenary speakers at their Atla Annual 2023.

Emily Drabinski is a Critical Pedagogy Librarian at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. She publishes and presents widely on issues related to power and organizing in librarianship. Drabinski edits *Gender & Sexuality in Information Studies* and serves on the editorial boards of *College & Research Libraries*, *the Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, and *the Philippine Journal of Library and Information Studies*. She will be inaugurated as president of the American Library Association on June 27th, 2023.

Walter Earl Fluker is the founder of Walter Earl Fluker & Associates. He serves as Dean's Professor of Spirituality, Ethics, and Leadership at Candler School of Theology at Emory University; Professor Emeritus of Ethical Leadership (formerly the Martin Luther King, Jr Chair) at Boston University and the editor of the Howard Thurman Papers Project. Professor Fluker developed a Massive Online Operating Course (MOOC) entitled *Ethical Leadership: Character, Civility and Community* that launched on May 24, 2016. He was founding executive director of the Andrew Young Center for Global Leadership Center and the Coca-Cola Professor of Leadership Studies at Morehouse College. Dr. Fluker is a featured consultant, speaker, lecturer and workshop leader at foundations, businesses, corporations, colleges, universities, governmental and religious institutions, nationally and globally.

# Events

## 51st General Assembly of BETH

### Challenges of Ecclesiastical Libraries in Europe

**Location: Episcopal Palace, Cordoba, Spain**

**Dates: 30th September - 4th October 2023**

All kinds of ecclesiastical institutions today are under pressure. Membership numbers are falling. Seminaries are facing fewer and fewer student numbers and are sometimes even forced to close, and monasteries are struggling with fewer and fewer vocations and are sometimes dissolved or merged with another monastery of the same order.

This has major consequences for the libraries attached to these institutions. In recent decades, dozens of ecclesiastical libraries scattered across Europe have closed down, the collections are either gathering dust, or have been sold, dispersed, and sometimes even ended up in the recycling bin.

At the upcoming BETH conference in Córdoba, however, we do not want to mourn what is lost, but want to reflect together on how we as librarians should act when the survival of a library is at risk.



# Events

## ABTAPL Spring Conference 2024

**Location: New College, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK**

**Dates: 21st March - 23rd March 2024**

The Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries (ABTAPL) has a conference every spring, from the Thursday to the Saturday ahead of Palm Sunday (the moveable feast a week before Easter), as celebrated by the established churches in the UK. In 2024 (21 to 23 March) we are meeting in Edinburgh. The focus of the conference is on continuing professional development for our members, through visits to local libraries and talks from members, to share expertise and experience, and external presenters from library and academic backgrounds. We also make sure there is plenty of time to members to network with one another, for informal discussions about our work and problem solving. Our members range from solo librarians in theological colleges and other small institutions to employees of large UK universities; we also have an increasing number of personal and retired members who keep up their connection with ABTAPL because of the social and professional value that brings.

