



# BETH

**Bibliothèques Européennes de Théologie**

# BETH Bulletin 2024

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No 02

Hannie Riley and Jussi Hyvärinen

The **BETH Bulletin** (BB) is published by BETH. BETH is an ecumenical association of European national theological library organizations as well as single libraries. Its members together represent nearly 1500 libraries, spreading from north to south and east to west of Europe. BETH builds networks and establishes contacts, supports and promotes cooperation, stimulates library development, serves the interests of European theological libraries, and works for the preservation of the rich cultural patrimony found in the theological and ecclesiastical libraries of Europe. This open access BB is published once a year.

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p01 BETH  
p02 Contents  
P03 Preface: Editors

## Messages

p04 Incoming: From the  
Newly Arriving President  
p06 Outgoing: From the Departing  
Secretary  
p08 Cordoba 2024: Some Memories  
from the BETH Conference  
P12 Empowered by the 32nd  
EBLIDA Conference

## In-depth

p15 The Identity of European  
Theological Libraries in the Age  
of Secularisation  
p23 "The Books Belonging to the  
Church in the Library..." Renewing  
the Relationship between  
Church of Scotland and  
University of Edinburgh  
p32 Digital Libraries as a Social System  
p42 Evaluating Access as Social  
Interaction  
p58 Let's Work Together

## Focus

P61 The Fate of the Libraries of  
the Company of Jesus after  
their Expulsion in 1767  
p68 Reorganisation of the  
Library of the Benedictine  
Monastery of Mariastein  
P75 To Save the Orphaned Ones  
p84 How Oswald Chambers' Wife  
Compiled and Self-published  
his Books

## Creativity

p92 dans les yeux  
p104 A Sword Pierces Soul  
p106 Catte Street, looking towards  
the Radcliffe Camera and the  
Bodleian

## Events

p108 Atla Annual 2024  
p109 52st General Assembly of BETH  
p110 ABTAPL Spring Conference  
2025

## Editors

Hannie Riley and Jussi Hyvärinen

With great pleasure and excitement, we extend a warm welcome to you all as we unveil the second edition of the BETH Bulletin. This publication stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to fostering communication and knowledge-sharing within our community. As we navigate through this rapidly changing world, the exchange of ideas, experiences, and expertise becomes increasingly vital. Thus, the BETH Bulletin serves as a platform for us to celebrate our achievements, share insights, and explore the latest developments in our libraries and collections. With each issue, we aim to provide valuable resources and information that capture conference talks and various articles that introduce our practices, services, and provisions, which we hope will both empower us and contribute to the growth and advancement of our libraries.

In this edition, you will find a range of messages and reflections from our board members, diverse articles and updates covering many aspects of our ways to overcome evolving landscapes and challenges we face, and wonderful artistic creations by librarians and users alike to showcase our talents. Packed with innovative collaborative efforts and initiatives, each piece reveals the dedication and passion of individual members who are driving positive change in our industry.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all contributors, readers, and supporters who have made this publication possible. Your ongoing engagement and participation are invaluable as we work towards building a stronger, more connected BETH community to learn, collaborate, and inspire one another. We hope you find this edition of the BETH Bulletin both informative and inspiring. May it serve as a source of knowledge, inspiration, and encouragement as we journey forward together towards a brighter future.

Warm regards,

Hannie and Jussi

## Incoming From the Newly Arriving President

**Stefano Maria Malaspina**

Librarian, The Library of the Metropolitan Chapter of Milan, Milan, Italy

The last few years have been particularly intense for BETH, we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary in 2023; the publication of the *Festschrift: Theological Libraries and Library Associations in Europe* <sup>[1]</sup> (2022), the result of many people's hard work, has begun to tell our story: the more we know and share it, the more we can move forward and make the best and wisest choices for the future.

I am encouraged that I have already witnessed new vitality amongst the members of BETH over the last couple of years: the interest in the Association is increasing, and together we are treading a path that is new, in many aspects. Some important people have moved on, leaving valuable legacies and a last impact on BETH, but the desire to do one's best in the service of a common idea is still present and clear for all. I express my sincere thanks to them, and ask you to please excuse me for not naming each individual who has contributed to our accomplishments.



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[1] <https://brill.com/display/title/61181>

To stimulate communication, to open up and to get to know each other better, is the first step towards facing the future in the best possible way. "Relationships, relationships, relationships!" This phrase rang out at the last Atla Annual Conference in June 2023, and for almost a year it has been persistently ringing in my ears, growing more and more, and I think it can be interpreted as a 'good seed' for something even greater to come. Thus began the desire to see each other again - albeit at a distance - through periodical online gatherings called 'Panacea', which was successfully launched in December 2023. We talk to each other, discuss a theme, and speak in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. The Bulletin, which became an annual publication in 2023, is a further way of communicating the association's initiatives.

In this challenging world, the best way to move forward is together, and BETH is encouraging everyone to take part. Little by little, I am confident that BETH will inspire new ideas and projects. We will collaborate, lead, and guide each other. Additionally, we will ensure we document all achievements for our history, sharing them with future members.

Just as in a field, seeds are sown, and the fruit will come, in its own time. Meanwhile, BETH will diligently water them, providing tender care and nurturing so that we can collectively gather the harvest and share the great joy.

## Outgoing From the Departing Secretary

**Matina Ćurić**

2018-2023

Librarian, Pontifical Mission Society, Aachen, Germany

After five years, seven conferences, and taking 54 meeting minutes, the time has come for me to pass on the noble feather of *secretarius* of BETH. It has been an unforgettable journey to serve all of you and the BETH Board. When, in 2017, I was invited by the Board to take the role of the next Secretary, I had no previous experience of serving on any Board or association. Although I



had known BETH for a few years before my appointment, much of the work of BETH was new to me and I went in intending to give all I could, all the time thinking about not disappointing the three fathers who started this good work in the 1950s and further advancing the 'apostolic' mission of BETH they left us with.

The new role of the BETH Secretary came at the same time as my move from Croatia to Germany, so not only was I embarking on a new field of association work, but I was also immersed in a new language, culture, and context. In the last seven years, I have been stretched out of my comfort zone personally and professionally on so many occasions and levels that I can think of, but at the same time, all this new experience on the ground was the best tool and environment to help me grow (up). Working on different projects and events, and being in correspondence with colleagues from different European countries and the world, opened the field of

theological librarianship to me in a way no other role would have done. I have learned immense amounts about the social, cultural, and political contexts in which our libraries are found, and have been able to appreciate and contemplate on a new level the rich heritage, complexity, and challenges of our service to churches, religious communities, academia, and humanity in general.

At the same time, this creative and versatile work, where I had much freedom to explore and implement ideas, helped me to learn a lot about myself, my strengths, and my weaknesses. Thank you all for supporting me during my entire term, in all the ups and downs, and please accept my apologies and my deepest regret if I might deliberately and unintentionally have done or said something wrong to any of you. Specially, I want to thank the capable and talented members of the Board, for their guidance, commitment, and creativity. It was a pleasure working, planning, and discussing with you. Many thanks to our financial administrator, Marjolijn Palma, and IT administrator, Jan Verkoyen, for their support and wonderful cooperation, as well as all the conference hosts, associations, and project partners. All of you have greatly contributed to my professional growth and enriched me as a person.

As I reflect on the work and journey of BETH in the past five years, I recognize many significant moments and achievements, all of which make me incredibly grateful that I had the opportunity to serve on the Board during this time. Our Board, membership, and network grew and our conferences – which get better and more interesting, year on year – almost doubled in attendance. Increasingly, European and international librarians, scholars, projects, and other associations know about our work and are partnering with us. We have given BETH a new visual identity, professionalized its work, and set up many new regulations and processes. For two successive years we tried to host the annual conference in Lviv and spread our network in other Eastern European countries, only to be stopped in our plans by the pandemic. But the relationships with our Ukrainian colleagues stayed and grew, and now amid war, we are trying to support them as much as we can. In 2022, we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary, published a grand work on our history, and launched a Bulletin.

As I make my exit from the Board, I will not say I will miss you, because I hope to continue staying involved in this excellent work. Rather, I invite you all to give your contribution to BETH as it engages more and more in its own projects and initiatives in the future and support them in any way you can.



## Cordoba 2024: Some Memories from the BETH conference

**Fran Cortés**

Librarian, Universidad Loyola Andalucía, Sevilla, Spain

The 51st Annual Conference of BETH was held from 30th October to 4th September 2023 at the Episcopal Palace of Cordoba hosted by the Diocesan Library of Cordoba, with the support of ABIE (Association of Librarians of the Church in Spain)<sup>[1]</sup>, under the theme 'Challenges of Ecclesiastical Libraries in Europe'.



Participation was high with representatives from the national associations of France, Italy, Poland, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Ireland, Spain, Hungary, Croatia, as well as representatives from Urbe (Ecclesiastical Libraries of the City of Rome) and Atla (American Theological Library Association)<sup>[2]</sup>.

The conference programme<sup>[3]</sup> focused around presentations on the different challenges that European church libraries face in the various countries represented. Although the reality of these challenges may vary from country to country, common issues were discussed: changes in library spaces, cooperation and networking with public and private spheres, preservation, digitisation, and so on...

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[1] <https://abie.es/>

[2] <https://www.atla.com/>

[3] <https://beth.eu/events/annual-conferences/51st-2023-cordoba>

The BETH Members' Assembly – a standard part of such conferences – was also held, where the annual reports of the different associations were presented. ABIE also participated in this regard, and our report can be seen on BETH's website alongside those of the other national associations.

Particularly impressive was the presentation by our Ukrainian colleague Oleh Yaskiv, Vice-Rector for Science at the Ukrainian Catholic University, who, dressed in military uniform, told us how he had gone from doing his job before the war to being in charge of tracking Russian propaganda on television, thanks to his command of English, in order to counteract this false propaganda. At the beginning of the war, they moved their most valuable resources to try to preserve them from the bombs. In all this time they have also managed to produce a small number of graduates. BETH is especially involved in helping the Ukrainian partners in various ways.

Thanks to the sponsorship of the Cabildo of the Cathedral of Cordoba we were able to enjoy a magnificent social and cultural programme alongside the more academic conference proceedings, which included a private evening visit to the Mosque-Cathedral, celebration of the Eucharist in the Cathedral, a visit to the magnificent Cordovan courtyards, plus guided tours of the historic centre and various museums. We also enjoyed the gastronomy of Cordoba, both at the dinners in the Episcopal Palace and at the last farewell gala dinner.

The feedback received after the event and subsequent evaluation of the conference by the members of BETH was very positive both academically and socially. We thank BETH for having chosen Spain for this Annual Conference. We at ABIE are pleased to have helped in its celebration, with special thanks to the Diocesan Library of Cordoba for its welcome and to the Cabildo of the Cathedral of Cordoba for its support.



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[4] <https://beth.eu/members/reports/annual-reports-2022-2023/>

La 51ª Conferencia Anual de Beth [www.beth.eu](http://www.beth.eu) se celebró del 30 de Octubre al 4 de septiembre de 2023 en el Palacio Episcopal de Córdoba acogidos por la Biblioteca Diocesana de Córdoba, con el apoyo de ABIE<sup>[1]</sup>, bajo el lema “Challenges of Ecclesiastical Libraries in Europe”.

La participación fue alta con representantes de las asociaciones nacionales de Francia, Italia, Polonia, Noruega, Bélgica, Países Bajos, Alemania, Finlandia, Suecia, Suiza, Reino Unido e Irlanda, España, Hungría, Croacia, Urbe (Bibliotecas Eclesiásticas de la Ciudad de Roma), así como representantes de Atla<sup>[2]</sup>.

El programa<sup>[3]</sup> académico incluyó conferencias relativas a los desafíos que las bibliotecas eclesásticas europeas tienen en los diversos países. Aunque la realidad de estos retos pueden variar de un país a otros, si se dialogó sobre asuntos comunes: cambios en los espacios bibliotecarios, cooperación y redes con ámbitos públicos y privados, preservación, digitalización etc..

Asimismo y como es habitual en todas las Conferencias, se tiene la Asamblea de miembros de BETH, en donde se presentan los informes anuales de las distintas asociaciones. Desde ABIE presentamos el nuestro que se encuentra en este enlace con los de las demás asociaciones nacionales.<sup>[4]</sup>

Especialmente impactante fue la ponencia de nuestro colega ucraniano, de la Universidad Católica de Ucrania, Ole Yaskiv, Vice-rector de Ciencia, que vestido con uniforme militar nos contó cómo ha pasado de hacer su trabajo antes de la guerra, a ser ahora en el ejército el encargado de rastrear la propaganda rusa en televisiones, gracias a su dominio de inglés, para poder así contrarrestar dicha propaganda falsas. Realizaron al comienzo de la guerra un cambio de localización de sus fondos más valiosos para intentar preservarlos de las bombas. En todo este tiempo han conseguido sacar una pequeña promoción de graduados. BETH colabora especialmente en ayudar a los socios Ucranianos de diversos modos.

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[1] <https://abie.es/>

[2] <https://www.atla.com/>

[3] <https://beth.eu/events/annual-conferences/51st-2023-cordoba>

[4] <https://beth.eu/members/reports/annual-reports-2022-2023/>



Gracias al patrocinio del Cabildo de la Catedral de Córdoba pudimos disfrutar de un magnífico programa social y cultural, que incluyó visita nocturna privada a la Mezquita-Catedral, celebración de la Eucaristía en la misma, visita a magníficos patios cordobeses, visita guiada al centro histórico, y varios museos. Disfrutamos de igual manera de la gastronomía cordobesa tanto en las cenas en el palacio Episcopal, como en la última cena de gala de despedida en un restaurante. La evaluación posterior por parte de los miembros de BETH fue muy positiva tanto en el plano académico como en el social. Agradecemos a BETH el haber elegido España para esta Conferencia Anual.

Desde la ABIE estamos contentos de haber ayudado a su celebración, agradeciendo especialmente a la Biblioteca Diocesana de Córdoba por su acogida y al Cabildo de la Catedral de Córdoba por su apoyo.



## Empowered by the 32nd EBLIDA Conference

**Hannie Riley**

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

As the vice-president of BETH, I was privileged to represent BETH in the 32nd EBLIDA<sup>[1]</sup> (the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations) Annual Conference in the Torre do Tombo National Archives in Lisbon, Portugal from 9th to 10th April 2024. This conference was also a joint convention



with NAPLE<sup>[2]</sup> (National Authorities on Public Libraries in Europe) and RL:EU<sup>[3]</sup> (Resourcing Libraries: Connecting Libraries to EU Resources) so it was wonderful to be able to attend all three events in one go, alongside over 150 participants from all over Europe.

This year's EBLIDA Conference was particularly interesting and relevant to me as their chosen theme was "Charting the Future of Libraries". At last year's BETH conference, we discussed the challenges of ecclesiastical libraries in Europe, so it was an excellent opportunity to hear a diverse range of perspectives, from library professionals to policymakers, educators, and advocates, creating a rich tapestry of insights and ideas. As I reflect on the discussions, keynotes, and workshops, a few points emerge that resonate deeply with the evolving landscape of libraries and librarianship.

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[1] <https://eblida.org/>

[2] <https://naple.eu/>

[3] <https://resourcing-libraries.eu/>

First and foremost, the conference highlighted the urgent need for libraries to adapt to the changing needs of society. In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, demographic shifts, and socio-economic changes, libraries must embrace innovation and reinvent themselves as vibrant hubs of knowledge, community engagement, and lifelong learning. The keynote speech by Rolf Hapel addressed the importance of real community engagement, expanding library programmes and events, and reimagining library spaces as dynamic service centres, showing a deep commitment to serving the diverse needs of their communities.

One of the most pressing challenges discussed was the need to rethink library staffing and training strategies. The panel discussion on the relationship between future libraries and librarians highlighted the inadequacy of traditional training programmes in preparing library and information professionals for the complexities of the modern world. Speakers emphasised the importance of cultivating a diverse set of soft skills, including learning ability, social and communication skills, and agile project management, to thrive in the ever-changing library landscape.

Another critical theme was the role of libraries in promoting digital literacy and combating misinformation. In an age where information is abundant but often unreliable, libraries play a crucial role in helping users navigate the digital landscape effectively. Therefore, the importance of equipping library staff with the digital skills and competencies was discussed to support users in developing critical thinking skills, evaluating information sources, and leveraging digital technologies for learning and research. The workshops on AI and misinformation further explored these topics, offering practical strategies for leveraging technology to enhance library services while safeguarding against the spread of misinformation. Additionally, it must be said that the interactive escape room session prepared by OCLC (which challenged participants to recognise and combat misinformation) was a highlight of the conference, blending education with entertainment in a thought-provoking way.

On the second day, the RL:EU Conference, Digital Upskilling in Libraries, took place to present the resourcing libraries project, EU frameworks on digital competences, and EU funding programmes for libraries, including the digital education action plan, and the DigComp framework, as well as the Erasmus+ and CERV programmes.

The conference also gave us an introduction to various initiatives on digital upskilling for libraries in Europe - and the Living Libraries session, in particular - which provided valuable opportunities to discover 10 inspiring EU-funded projects on digital literacies. Please see more details from their article on the website.<sup>[4]</sup>

Whilst the experience was overwhelmingly positive, a few constructive observations can be made. I noticed the predominant emphasis was on developing librarian professional skill sets for digital literacy and training library users in AI and information advancement, yet, there was a noticeable absence of discussion and training on inclusiveness and equality. Similarly, there was very little advocacy aimed at supporting national and international librarians and libraries in desperate need when considering the future of libraries. For example, addressing the pressing needs of libraries in regions like Ukraine, which are still struggling to survive amid prolonged conflict, was simply not present, and there were no concerns for smaller libraries with financial constraints in less financially stable countries.

Throughout the conference, there was a palpable sense of optimism and possibility as participants engaged in discussions shared best practices, and forged new connections. Attending such a conference as this has not only provided valuable insight into the current state of EU funding programmes but also offered a platform for networking, learning, and collective action. As I reflect on the conference, I am filled with a renewed sense of purpose and enthusiasm for the future of libraries in Europe. Moving forward, I am inspired to apply the opportunities and lessons learned for BETH, advocating for the continued relevance and vitality of our members' libraries in the digital age.



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[4] <https://resourcing-libraries.eu/over-100-participants-at-the-rleu-conference-on-digital-upskilling-in-libraries/>

## Identity and Mission of Church Libraries in Europe

**Jaime López de Eguílaz Munsuri**

Librarian, Bilbao Diocesan Library. Bizkaia, Spain  
Treasurer of ABIE (Spanish Theological Library Association)

The European society in which the libraries of the Church in Europe operate is a complex society: under stress from different points of view, inequitable, and facing major technological, economic, and political changes.

It would not be fair to state categorically that in this first half of the 21st century, we have been left with a more difficult society than others in the past. It is enough to look at the history of the 20th century to glimpse particularly dark times for the development of an egalitarian, pacified Europe.

The different Christian Churches have had and still have the mission to bring the Gospel to those societies to which they belong with the aim of building communities where the Kingdom of God becomes more visible. This will only be possible if all the members of these Christian communities are capable of taking up the challenges that correspond to us on this path, each one from our own sphere of action. It is good to remember that this task does not belong only to the consecrated, or to specific pastoral groups. It involves every baptised person and everyone who has a responsibility in the work of, for example, an institution of the Church, such as its libraries.

It is a matter of realising that we all have an important mission in the development of more fraternal communities, and that they perceive that from their respective Churches, we are working towards this goal.



## **Church Libraries: What Are We Talking about?**

Our association is made up of different types of church libraries belonging to different Christian churches. Since its foundation, the ecumenical vision has been one of the hallmarks of the association (BETH, n.d.). Church libraries in Europe are mainly of the following types: university, diocesan, convent, seminary, patrimonial, and religious orders. They are not watertight compartments: for example, we find diocesan libraries which are also heritage libraries, or seminary libraries attached to faculties of theology.

The national associations that make up BETH represent some 1500 libraries spread across the length and breadth of old Europe. We are depositaries of an immense theological-religious bibliographical heritage which we work to preserve and disseminate. We have associations at our national level, and at the European level through BETH. We weave networks and synergies with both the public and private spheres to provide a quality service to our communities. For years we have been taking steps to improve our catalogues and make advancements in the professional training of librarians, taking an important personal involvement in the different projects we carry out. This is done in many countries where material, economic, and human resources for Church libraries are decreasing. One could say that there is a strong vocational component and commitment in many of the people who work in them.

It is also the case that (whilst recognising differences depending on the reality of each country) Church libraries have had very little visibility and presence in the professional library/librarian field. We are often little known, little valued, and finding difficulties entering into collaboration and being taken into account by the public sector. This reality is gradually changing thanks to the efforts of many institutions and their staff to participate in projects, to present collective catalogues that highlight the rich heritage we hold, and to support teaching and research.

## **In a Complex Europe**

As we are well aware, the mission to be carried out as institutions of the Church takes place in the society in which we live. We often look to the past with nostalgia, emphasising past times and valuing them as better than the ones we live in. Each era has its values and its difficulties and we tend to say, like the poet, "in our opinion, any time past was better" (Manrique 2011).

In previous centuries the Church's view of the world was tinged with constant suspicion. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in the Catholic sphere, this view has gradually changed: the world is the place of God's salvific action, and the place where the Church must accompany the yearnings and hopes of the human race:

The joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of the people of our time, especially the poor and those who suffer, are at the same time the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of Christ's disciples. There is nothing truly human that does not find an echo in his heart (Pope Paul VI, 1964).

And what is the Europe in which the Church's libraries are inserted? We do not intend in any way to make an exhaustive sociological, political, or economic analysis, but we do intend to point out some global characteristics that mark in some way the configuration of what today – and in the coming decades – constitutes the European space.

### A war at the heart of the continent.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is striking at the heart of the European project of stability, peace, and development. According to UNHCR figures, more than 6.3 million people have had to flee from Ukraine, escaping the horror of war, poverty, and destruction. This represents a humanitarian challenge of the first order, where selfless welcome should be the policy that prevails in all our countries. From BETH we have been aware of the harsh reality that our fellow librarians are going through, and their situation does not leave us indifferent.

## Political polarisation

In many European countries, there is a general disaffection towards the political class, in a context of strong polarisation and difficulties in reaching global agreements. This is leading to tense societies, where differences are widening and the consensus is diminishing. Likewise, it is no trivial matter that a large part of the citizenry has little appreciation for the shared European project, which is becoming increasingly disfigured.

## Miscegenation and multiculturalism

Our countries are taking shape as realities in which miscegenation and multiculturalism are signs of the identity of our societies. Migratory flows and increasing mobility mean that our communities are changing. This is a value that enriches them and is also a challenge for our library work. Here we can find one of the signs and missions of Christian institutions: to be welcoming communities. A multi-speed Europe with a high level of technological development. Europe's economic development is not homogeneous. It takes place at various speeds. There are many differences between, and within, countries. We will also have to redouble our efforts to make our library institutions areas where equality and the defence of the weakest are priority areas in our projects in line with the Gospel. At the same time, we are witnessing technological development like never before. This poses challenges to our libraries, which have been discussed at our meetings and conferences. Witnessing the development of Artificial Intelligence, for example, poses new technical challenges but also raises questions in the field of ethics, which we will have to examine in depth.

## The place of religion in European societies (Zazo Jiménez 2021)

The classical narrative of secularisation asserts that a process has been taking place in Europe for decades whereby the past is identified as a time of great religiosity and the present and future as a time where the fact of religion is diminishing or disappearing. Belief rates and religious practice are indeed on a downward trend according to various socio-religious studies. But, whilst this decline is documented,

the issue is more complex than affirming what the classical secularisation narrative has advocated regarding the near disappearance of religion in Europe. Here we can make a few assertions:

- It is doubtful that religion has ever had a **more important weight** than at present.
- This real situation does **not necessarily determine** (because it does not take into account the contingencies inherent in human life) a reality of the complete disappearance of religion from the European space.
- An increasing number of citizens **no longer trust traditional religious institutions** as the sole providers of meaning.
- The modulation of this secularisation process is **very uneven** from country to country: in France and the Czech Republic, almost half of the population declares itself atheist, agnostic, or indifferent to religions, while in countries such as Romania and Poland, religious practice and belief rates are higher than the European average.
- We are witnessing an increase in the number of **non-Christian religions** in Europe that are **embedded in society**, which challenges the classic narrative of secularisation.
- **Christian religious institutions**, despite the observed stagnation, are **strongly rooted in European society through an immense cultural, symbolic, and material heritage**. As a consequence, we can speak of a diffuse Christian cultural identity, beyond the rates of religious practice and belief.

Danièle Hervieu-Léger uses the term "belonging without belief" to refer to this reality: an individual cannot deny his or her belonging to Christianity in general, and to the Christian confession of his or her country in particular, where they continue to attend certain rites such as baptism, marriage, funerals, and consider it a source of diffuse cultural identity, despite professing to not believe in dogmas, and having no religious praxis (2005, 137). In short, we can affirm that the classical narrative of secularisation does not hold as it stands. Christianity still has an enormous material and symbolic heritage in Europe, and this is compounded by the rise and presence of other non-Christian religions, which started almost from scratch in many European countries.

## A Look at the Mission of Church Libraries and their Librarians

Looking at the mission we have as librarians of European Christian churches, we want to emphasise the specificity of being Christians and belonging to Christian institutions. There will certainly be nuances in attitudes across the board, but also commonalities, and global visions of the library service that help to remind us of the mission we are entrusted with. We take it for granted that a librarian in one of our institutions will possess the technical and scientific training related to the world of librarianship as any colleague in a public library. In addition, a knowledge of theology or religious sciences certainly adds to the work of a church librarian. It helps to understand the meaning that cultural heritage has for the Christian faith and to have a vision of the different subjects that make up the theological field.

A few paths to follow:

- Conserving our **rich bibliographical heritage and disseminating it** by placing it at the service of society, facilitating research and helping ecumenical dialogue.
- Promoting spaces for **fraternal cultural dialogue** through our own activities, or by joining community initiatives which favour these objectives.
- Ensuring the objectives of our library are **aligned with the objectives** of the church to which we belong in our local reality. The library cannot stand apart from them. To this end, it must be made easier for librarians to coordinate and have a voice in the co-responsibility bodies of each institution. We must avoid the potentially likely scenario of a library having a low valuation in the eyes of the institution to which it belongs, resulting in limited resources.
- Making it possible for library spaces to be, as far as possible, **welcoming spaces** where different people can come together for various reasons.
- Being disseminators of Christian culture without complexes, **supporting the pastoral and evangelising work in our communities**.
- Committing to the **presence of Christian symbols in our libraries**, on our websites and on social networks, of images and messages that deepen and promote spirituality makes visible the type of institution we are and what we want to offer.
- Entering into **dialogue with our library users**. We have all had (or could have) experiences where users perceive (or are able to perceive) from our attitude towards them, from our words and help, the face of a Christian community that wants to be attentive to their needs.

- Offering up recommendations from our wealth of resources. In our bibliographic collections, we have real gems of Christian spirituality, hagiographies, church history, etc., which can help people who come to us looking for answers. Why not offer them up in newsletters or other recommendations?

The participation of the library in the social fabric of its community should be a **priority action**: it is or can be one of the spaces where social life takes place, and it is an opportunity to create synergies, contribute to our vision, and grow as a community. The **coordination of the library with other church bodies is necessary** not only to give visibility to the library, but to help us better understand the needs of the community. Let us think for example of the groups in charge of caring for the sick, of social and charitable activities, of family and youth ministry, etc. The added value and knowledge that these groups can provide will help us to programme activities that will help them in their work, and so too increase traffic to our spaces at the same time.

There is no doubt that we are witnessing difficult times at various levels in our libraries. We know the problems that many are going through. But our work remains fundamental as Christian libraries. Let us be able to infect ourselves with something inherent in the Christian faith: hope. Not as a discourse out of touch with reality, but as a conviction that we are not alone on the way.

**"And behold I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28, 20).**

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## "The Books belonging to the Church in the library...": Partnership-working for the Future of New College Library, Edinburgh<sup>[1]</sup>

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"The books belonging to the Church in the Library..." is a phrase taken from the 1962 Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Edinburgh and the Church of Scotland. They refer to the collections of New College Library, the Divinity Library of the University of Edinburgh. This article will explore the relationship between the Church of Scotland and the University of Edinburgh and how these have shaped the development of New College Library.<sup>[1]</sup>

### **The University of Edinburgh, the School of Divinity, and New College Library**

The University of Edinburgh opened in 1583, following Bishop Robert Reid's bequest of funds to found a college of higher learning in Edinburgh in his will of 1558 (Edinburgh, Our History 2016). While the University at its foundation functioned

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[1] This paper is an updated and revised version of: Love-Rodgers, Christine. 2018. "'The books belonging to the Church in the Library...'" Renewing the relationship between Church and University." *Bulletin of the Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries* 25 (1): 9-13. <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/31462>.



largely as a college for the training of clergy in the Church of Scotland, it was the secular foundation, led by the Town Council of Edinburgh which played a unique role in its governance (Edinburgh, History 2023).

The University of Edinburgh is now a world-leading university with nearly 50,000 students. The School of Divinity itself is a leading provider of theological education in the UK and was ranked 1st in Scotland and 5th in the UK for Theology and Religious Studies in the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), (Edinburgh, School 2022). The School is also ranked in the world's top 20 universities for Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2023). It is one of the centres for Ministry training for the Church of Scotland, and also provides CPD and short courses for ministers and lay church members.

New College Library is one of ten University of Edinburgh Libraries and is one of the UK's largest theological libraries. It supports the School of Divinity and the wider University, with over 250,000 print items occupying five floors. This includes nearly 3000 linear metres of Heritage Collections material. Students and staff also have access to extensive electronic resources, with course readings available via online resources or reading lists.

## Landmarks in New College Library History

New College Library was born out of church division and disruption. The Disruption of 1843 was a schism or division within the Church of Scotland, when over a third of the ministers in the established Church broke away over the issue of the Church's relationship with the State, to form the Free Church of Scotland (Brown n.d.). It came at the end of a bitter conflict within the established Church, and had high effects not only within the Church, but also upon Scottish culture and civic life. This split was replicated in the University's Divinity Faculty.

Figure 1. Disruption Brooch, c.1843. ©University of Edinburgh. The brooch was made for the wives of the ministers who supported the Disruption to wear as a token of their support



Immediately following these events, in May 1843, Rev. David Welsh (former University professor of Ecclesiastical History) addressed the Free Church General Assembly to invite the foundation of New College Library. It is important to note that this was at a point when the new Free Church was still a protest movement. Worshippers in the new denomination had no church buildings of their own and were meeting in fields and temporary accommodation – even on ships. David Welsh was passionate about the importance of the library for training ministers in the new Free Church, and he was the first New College Librarian (1843); in fact, the Library began in his house. David Welsh was a charismatic fundraiser and donations seeker for the Free Church and New College Library, and also a notable antiquarian book scholar.



Figure 2. Free Church ministers, 1843. Image from Hill & Adamson Calotypes Collection ©University of Edinburgh. David Welsh appears at the lectern

Moving forward nearly 90 years, following the reunion of the Church of Scotland and United Free Church in 1929, the two main centres of theological learning in Edinburgh – New College and the University’s Divinity Faculty – came together. However, while University teaching had been united, work still remained to physically bring the libraries of these two centres together. A landmark agreement was made in 1962; at that point the library buildings and the books within them were transferred into the management of the University in a Memorandum of Agreement with the Church of Scotland (Scotland, Church, of. 1962, 243). The library collections acquired prior to 1962 remained in the ownership of the Church of Scotland. Post 1962, all books acquired for New College Library have been purchased by and belong to the University of Edinburgh. Access rights for ministers from both the Church of Scotland and the remaining Free Church were preserved.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, New College Library adopted online cataloguing and later Library of Congress classification, in line with the University of Edinburgh Library. Between 2006-2016, New College Library benefited from the Funk Donation Special Collections Projects. Gifted by Dr Robert Funk, this donation provided \$1,000,000 of investment for Special Collections at New College Library. Projects focused on Cataloguing (35,000+ items), Preservation and Security (Love-Rodgers 2016).

## 21st Century Partnership Working

In recent years there has been a renewed focus on the partnership with the Church of Scotland, as the University's understanding of the importance of the New College Library collections and buildings has increased (the Funk projects being a contributory factor to this). New developments included revised Library Access for Church workers, a new Addendum to the 1962 Agreement, and the New College Library Project.

The 1962 agreement had enshrined the rights of active and retired ministers from the Church of Scotland and Free Church to access and borrow the print collections of New College Library. However this presented some anomalies within University library management. Library access was normally granted to all ten University Library sites, not just one. No public information was available about this



Figure 3. Sign for New College, combining the Church of Scotland's Burning Bush emblem with the arms of the University of Edinburgh.  
©University of Edinburgh

historic arrangement, leading to questions from church ministers in other denominations about why they did not have this special entitlement. Our library helpdesk staff work as part of the larger flexible team across all library helpdesks, which supports staffing cover in sickness and holiday absence. This meant that staff covering at New College Library, who were used to other library sites, were unused to New College Library's unique arrangements. Unlike in 1962, it was no longer an environment where, if the Moderator of the Church of Scotland walked through the library door, library staff would automatically recognise them. The Church itself had also changed, with a much wider spectrum of roles and employees who were interested in using the library, from Parish Assistants to Youth and Families Workers, not just Parish ministers.

After discussion with the Church, we took a paper to the University Library Committee in 2017 which clarified and enhanced library access arrangements for ministers, students, and employees of the Church of Scotland and Free Church. This established free borrowing access to all University sites for these groups, on the production of ID proving Church employment. For the first time, these arrangements were then made transparent on a web page (Edinburgh, Church, 2023), increasing visibility, and they were also promoted in the Church of Scotland's magazine *Life & Work* (Love-Rodgers 2017, 29).

In 2019 we were able to take forward a much larger piece of work to develop an Addendum to the 1962 Agreement. This was necessary due to:

- Changes in the library environment – the 1962 agreement was formulated at a very different time, before the growth of digital collections;
- Collection growth – the New College Library holdings have matched the expansion in student numbers and research in Divinity, to the point at which the building is effectively full;
- Digitisation – there is a growing expectation that the collections will be available online, but at present, only a very small fraction of NCL holdings have been digitised (<1%). A programme of digitisation for New College material required more clarity on ownership, rights, and licensing issues.

Developing the Addendum was a significant piece of work involving numerous meetings between University, Church, and Library staff, and finally the University and Church legal teams. Changes include clarification of ownership and procedures for withdrawals, collection loans, temporary relocation of collections, and collections digitisation. It was legally ratified by the Church of Scotland General Assembly, May 2019 (Church of Scotland, Decision 2019, 9-10).

## **New College Library Project 2020-2023**

Not long after the 2019 Addendum, we were notified by the University's Estates department of a major New College Fire Asset Protection Project. Developed in the context of the major fires at the Glasgow School of Art Library and at Notre Dame, the building's work required us to fully decant all New College Library Collections. In January 2020, New College Library's General Collections moved to 40 George Square, remaining fully accessible to students and staff. Heritage Collections were more complex (and also delayed by COVID), but later in 2020, the New College Heritage Collections were moved to multiple locations including deep storage.

The overall budget for the New College Fire Asset Protection was approximately £8.3 million and covered extensive building improvement works to the whole New College site. From this, £903,000 was allocated to the Library move project. These project budget numbers are evidence of the significant investment in these Church buildings by the University. In Table 1, you can also see the sheer size of the New College Library collections in linear metres – approaching 7 kilometres of materials in total. The Library Project budget covered staffing, contractors, materials, and storage costs for all library move and associated conservation work. Library building improvements included a new water sprinkler fire protection system, disabled lift access, roof repairs, asbestos removal, and a relocated Heritage Collections reading room.

New College Library reopened in its original building at Mound Place on 11 September 2023. These Library moves were made in challenging conditions including sharing access routes with the Edinburgh Festival, on-site building contractors, the University's Welcome Week, and normal semester-time library users. The return of New College Library collections is still a work in progress.

Heritage Collections moves, originally due to take place in July 2023, were paused due to significant and unexpected high humidity levels and further building assessment and remedial actions have been taking place. We are now working on the full return of the New College Heritage Collections in 2023-24. Reflecting on the steps towards successful partnership-working that have made these projects possible, a key aspect was the foundation of good relationships built over the years that made difficult conversations possible. The updated Memorandum of Understanding in 2019 was helpful for both Church and University, as a reminder of New College collections, their complexities, and their legal standing. We have worked, where possible, to simplify complexities, such as library access for ministers, and ensure that what the Church receives is not only just as good as, but hopefully better than, previous arrangements.

Collection	Linear metres moved
General Collections	4,070
Rare Books	2,629
Archives	265
Artworks and museum objects	n/a

Table 1. New College Library holdings in meterage

During the years of the New College Library project, representatives from both the Church and the School of Divinity sat side by side with Library staff on project boards, able to have direct engagement with the project. In the closing stages of the project, weekly face-to-face meetings have supported an honest conversation about project progress (and delays) and have led to the proposal of a New College Library Strategy group meeting as an established University committee. Finally, regular communications by email and letter with the School and the Church have helped to keep everyone in the picture.

## The Future

Through this partnership-working between University and Church, we believe we are enabling New College Library to meet the challenges it is facing for the future.

Part funded by the Church of Scotland, we have already begun to digitise New College Library's collections for use by scholars, churchmen, and public alike (University of Edinburgh University of Edinburgh collections n.d.). To give just one example, New College Library holds a comprehensive collection of the Free Church newspaper *The Witness*. Edited by Hugh Millar, it is part of New College's unique story as a powerhouse of religious protest, renewal, and scholarship, and so digitising it will preserve this and enable interaction with the paper for future generations.



Figure 4. : Millar, Hugh. (1843) *The Witness*, 20 May, Front page. Available at: <https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/>

Once our Heritage Collections have fully returned to the building, we look forward to a newly reconfigured Heritage Collections reading room enabling teaching with collections. This will further support the Library to develop New College Collections outreach to the Church community and beyond.

With thanks to Hannah Mateer, Christine Megowan, Margaret Redpath and all of the colleagues who made the 2023 library moves possible.

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## Digital Libraries as a Social System

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The BETH (European Library Association) conference 2023 was a place for the BETH member librarians to gather together to discuss the challenges we faced and how we overcame these problems. Many presentations talked about the importance of digitisation projects and collaborative efforts between libraries in electronic resource systems and provisions.

Matti Myllykoski from Helsinki University Library, Finland, has been warning us for the last couple of years that in libraries in his country, their print collections are shrinking, and e-collections are growing at an exponential rate. This is, of course, not a unique case. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, has had an 'e-first' policy since 2019, prioritising e-acquisition for reading list materials (Bodleian Libraries n.d.). This change is driven by user behavioural trends, themselves accelerated by COVID-19, as millions of ordinary library users all over the world prefer to search the web at their fingertips to find information to solve their problems digitally.

It has become critical for libraries to keep pace with the rapid development of electronic information sources, new technologies and equipment, and the accessibility of social media services as information tools, in order to survive in a new user-driven, participatory, personalised online realm. Libraries are left with no choice but to adapt and stay connected to the rapidly changing world of digital technologies. With more and more library materials available digitally, whether they are digitised or digitally born, most libraries provide electronic resources at some level. Libraries are increasingly expanding the digital part of their service or digital library regardless of whether through acquisition of new e-resources or by digitising their existing collections.

During the conference, I was particularly interested in the presentation of 'Integration of Religion Culture and Society in the Library in Tomislavgrad' by Vinko Šarac. He explained how he enabled providing his library service with cultural, religious, and social programmes. This practice can also be applicable to the digital environment hence the digital library as a social system.

## **Definition of Digital Library**

First, the definition of the digital library should be examined. What is a digital library? Arnepalli and Rao (2020, 1) defined the digital library as 'an information retrieval system rather than an information service' but not all see a digital library, as they did, as a simple computerised system.

Van House (2003, 272) clarified that 'the digital library is not simply a new technology or organisational form but a change in the social and material bases of knowledge work and the relations among people who use and produce information artefacts and knowledge.' Schatz (2002, vii) also understood the importance of digital libraries in society in her earlier work, claiming that 'as the Internet itself becomes increasingly part of the structure of the world, so will the process of creating useful digital libraries become a critical part of society' (Schatz 1997). She explained that previous generations of the internet were concentrated on the technology itself by transmitting data from one machine to another correctly, but today the focus has shifted to searching documents across many collections over the internet (Schatz 2002, vii). In other words, 'consideration in sociology becomes equally important' as well as the advancement of technology, because 'the development of an information-retrieval system is determined largely by technology but the deployment is determined largely by sociology' (Schatz 2002, vii).

From these definitions above, we can extract two important components for the digital libraries: technologies of the internet and web, and community-based society. These two aspects, technology and society, are so closely knitted that it is hard to think of them separately in the digital environment as technology needs users. Pang

(2012, 86) explained that 'one cannot fathom a digital library without considering the social interactions driving its development, sustainability and use' hence digital libraries are essentially social in nature.' Van House et al (2003, 3) explained that 'technology creates linkages among information resources, groups, and individuals that have never existed and could not have existed before.' No wonder Van House et al defined digital libraries as 'sociotechnical systems- networks of technology, information, document, people and practices' (2003, 1) as they are built upon technologies and society. Therefore, they have a role to play as a social system.

## **Role of Digital Libraries**

The user-generated, sharing, and personalised web technologies allow the digital library to play a role in society in the following aspects: preservation of knowledge; democratising information access; education and lifelong learning support; and communication and collaboration platform and community building.

### Preservation of Knowledge

By digitising historical and cultural documents, digital libraries play an important role in preserving knowledge for future generations as repositories of digital information. This function is essential in maintaining the continuity of cultural heritage and scholarly research. They digitise and archive historical documents, manuscripts, images, and artefacts, ensuring that these invaluable resources are protected from physical deterioration and loss. Also, this digital preservation makes cultural and historical materials accessible to a wider audience, fostering a greater appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures and histories.

Additionally, digital libraries often collaborate with cultural institutions, museums, and archives to expand their collections and provide more comprehensive access to cultural heritage. This collaboration enhances the visibility and reach of cultural treasures, promoting global cultural exchange and understanding on the international scale.

## Democratising Information and Its Access

With digitised materials and various e-resources, digital libraries contribute to modern society because one of the most profound impacts of digital libraries is the democratisation of information. By making vast amounts of knowledge universally accessible online, digital libraries break down traditional barriers to information, allowing people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, geographic locations, and educational levels to access the same resources. Digital libraries help to level the playing field, providing equal opportunities for education and research, and encouraging informed decision-making. This widening access bridges the gap in information disparity and supports educational equity, enabling students and researchers from diverse backgrounds to have high-quality information and resources. This inclusivity is particularly crucial in developing regions where access to physical libraries and educational materials is limited.

## Education and Lifelong Learning Support

By providing access to diverse learning materials, digital libraries empower individuals to pursue lifelong learning and research paths. This autonomy in learning encourages a culture of curiosity and innovation, essential for adapting to the ever-evolving demands of the modern workforce. In a rapidly changing world, continuous learning is essential for personal and professional development. Digital libraries offer a wide range of resources, from academic journals and e-books to online courses and multimedia content, catering to learners of all ages and interests.

For example, libraries can promote digital literacy to users, especially to those who are less familiar with the digital environment. As Gross (2012, 2) pointed out, library and information services have 'evolved from providing information to enabling literacy and creating learning communities'. At the RL:EU (Connecting Libraries EU Resources) conference 2024 in Lisbon, Portugal, many libraries demonstrated their successful projects during the Living Library session. These librarians actively engaged in user training and education of digital literacy, recognising the importance of upskilling users' digital competencies, developing critical thinking

skills, evaluating information sources, and leveraging digital technologies for learning and research. This is a crucial social role for the library; being involved in an age where information is overloaded but often unreliable, to help users navigate the digital landscape safely and effectively.

## Communication and Collaborative Platform and Community Building

It is extraordinary how the vast range of communities, individuals, and corporations are sharing information on the Internet nowadays. Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, X/Twitter, Instagram, Wikipedia and blogs are based on open communication and the sharing of information in social media communities. As users can communicate, interact, and collaborate via a vast number of freely available web tools, they participate in a revolutionary way to digital libraries. Cohen (2007, v) confirmed this, stating 'Libraries make collections available via open, personalised, interactive services that encourage such activities as content creation, editing, commenting, annotating, bookmarking, rating, and tagging by users.' There are many ways for libraries to practise this with technologies such as 'faceted browsing, relevancy ranking, subject or tag cloud, and various social options' (Cohen 2007, v).

Therefore, one of the most significant contributions of digital libraries is their service as hubs: they offer collaborative platforms, facilitating the exchange of ideas and knowledge among users. Advanced digital tools and technologies enable users to annotate texts, share insights, and engage in collaborative research. These interactive features transform passive consumption of information into active participation, enhancing the overall learning experience.

Furthermore, through virtual events, discussion forums, and collaborative projects, they provide platforms for social interaction and community building. These activities of common interest foster a sense of belonging and collaboration and interaction among users, enhancing the social fabric of communities. Through forums, discussion boards, and social media integrations, they enable knowledge sharing and collective problem-solving.

All these functions are often tightly intertwined in digital libraries, integral to the information needs of contemporary society.

For example, the simplest thing to allow users to be engaged in is to write book reviews or to tag a book or article title in the library discovery tool, to aid both themselves and others. Indeed, SOLO from the University of Oxford offers such a tag option.

More complicated collaboration efforts can also be initiated by libraries. The National Library of Australia (NLA) led an excellent user participatory digitisation project, the Australian Newspaper Digitisation Programme, in collaboration with Australian State and Territory Libraries. The NLA made available a new service which provided free online access to selected out-of-copyright Australian Newspapers. It reported in its online publication that it 'provided users of the newspaper service with the option of 'improving' the electronically generated text and sharing their revised version with other users. So popular has this activity become that, as in October 2009, users have corrected over 6.8 million lines of electronic text in over 310,000 articles' (National Library of Australia 2010). The newspaper digitalisation project was, therefore a collaborative effort.

Another of the most successful curations of user-instated digital collections is by an ABTAPL (Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries) member library, the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History Library. They have built a digital collection of British Methodist Buildings by allowing users to send in their own images. They now hold over 11,000 images, both current and past, of Methodist church buildings on their website (Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History n.d.).

These collaborated efforts demonstrate an exemplary case of a library as a sociotechnical system. The library initiated the project. Their communication was effectively advertised via social media and formed a dedicated community of users who were willing to participate and send their own images or take new images for the library. As Pang says, 'With social media, the potential value of information resources in digital libraries is heightened, as social media brings users together to create, use, evaluate and share information resources' (2012, 88). The library organised and curated these materials then made them available freely as a digital collection via their website. The initiative was library-driven but user participation

enabled it to succeed, creating a digital collection for the library and capturing history without much expense (both funding and time). This shows that the technologies are useful for the digital library to be in contact with the user community in increasing communication: such benefits occur as harnessing the power of the crowd by user participation, offering web community space for sharing and enhancing accessible service and marketing and advertising.

## **Impact of Digital Libraries on Society**

The influence of digital libraries extends beyond individual users, shaping societal structures and norms in various ways:

### Bridging the Digital Divide

Bawden and Robinson (2010, 244) cited Sturges and Gastingier's idea that information and digital literacy is considered as a human right. Whereas the digital library is trying to provide rich, current, and easily accessible collections of digital literacy in every possible way, this fundamental ethical idea speaks volumes. The digital library should have serious consideration in its responsibility for the quality and quantity of equality in information provision as the social system.

'Equality of access to information is often cited as a fundamental value of the information sciences and disciplines' (Bawden and Robinson 2010, 244). Despite the wealth of information available, 'the paradox of choice, the pressure of too much information and the inequitable nature of access have led to concerns about information overload, information anxiety and the digital divide' (Bawden and Robinson 2010, 245).

One thing we should not forget is that the principle of the library is still based on the ethical and social values of the library to society regardless of its format, digital or physical. Otherwise, there is no difference between commercial information

providers and libraries. It is not only limited to books and monographs for the traditional library to give worth and justification to the existence of the library, but rather social practices, which have assigned their dissemination and preservation. The same can be said of the case of the digital library. Service to the public and social responsibility should not be overlooked by engaging in problems which have been brought in with the changes in the new wave of information flow through the web. By developing a digital collection or library in our theological libraries, we will bridge the digital divide, offering openings to the underserved, and those who do not have, whether it is digital library skillsets or accessibility to certain opportunities or resources. This inclusivity promotes social equality and economic development.

### Enhancing Research and Innovation

The ability to quickly search and retrieve relevant materials accelerates the research process and allows researchers to stay current with the latest developments in their fields. Researchers benefit from the extensive resources and tools available in digital libraries, which increases the pace of scientific discovery and technological innovation. Digital libraries are indispensable tools which offer access to a vast array of academic publications, data sets, and primary sources. These resources are crucial for conducting thorough and comprehensive research so digital libraries significantly enhance the research process for researchers. Open Access initiatives via digital libraries can also advance further the dissemination and impact of research.

Furthermore, digital libraries promote interdisciplinary research by providing resources from various fields of study in one accessible platform. This fosters collaboration and innovation, as researchers can easily explore and integrate knowledge from different disciplines, leading to new insights and advancements.

### Cultural and Social Transformation

Digital libraries contribute to cultural preservation and dissemination, supporting diverse voices and perspectives. They empower marginalised communities by providing platforms for expression and advocacy.



## Challenges

Despite their numerous benefits, digital libraries face several challenges. Ensuring equitable access to technology remains a significant issue, as digital divides persist in many parts of the world. Additionally, the sustainability of digital libraries depends on continuous funding and technological advancements, which can be uncertain. Moreover, issues of digital copyright clearance present ongoing challenges: balancing the need for open access with the rights of content creators requires careful policy formulation and implementation. Addressing these issues requires collaborative effort amongst stakeholders, including policymakers, technologists, and information professionals.

## Conclusion

Digital libraries are more than just digital repositories. As we move further into the digital age, the importance of digital libraries as integral components of our social infrastructure cannot be overstated. They are dynamic social systems, integrating technology, human interaction, and information resources to serve the evolving needs of society. They have a multifaceted role in democratising information access, fostering community engagement, and supporting digital literacy; lifelong learning and driving innovative research underscore its significance in the digital age. By serving as collaborative platforms and adapting to technological advancements, digital libraries will continue to address current challenges and expand their impact on society in shaping the future of information access and social development.

Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning promise to enhance the personalisation and efficiency of digital libraries. These technologies can improve search algorithms, recommend resources based on user preferences, and even create adaptive learning environments. Furthermore, as virtual and augmented reality technologies develop, digital libraries could offer immersive learning experiences, transforming how users interact with information and knowledge. As digital libraries continue to evolve, they will undoubtedly play an even more critical role, becoming even more integrated into our social systems as they are essential for building an informed, connected, and innovative society.

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# Evaluating Access as Social Interaction

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Memory institutions rely on the communal use of their services to properly serve their purpose as repositories of information. If the very people who use and support these institutions cannot access library or archival services, they hold no value at all. Access, then, is an essential component of any study on the field, as any processes or services rendered by archives and libraries cannot be obtained without first establishing consistent access to them. This is emphasised all the more by changes in technology, particularly developments brought by the digital age, which have exponentially increased both the possible routes by which users can access information and the complications brought by increases in scale. When considering the importance of establishing connections between users and the records and items held within memory institutions, any evaluation and assessment should focus on defining what access is in the context of archives and libraries and how best to implement access in an increasingly changing field.

## **Defining Access**

In establishing the meaning of access in the information management field, a research paradigm that properly aligns with realities in practice is needed. Considering the variety of memory institutions active in society and the various roles and user groups each are connected to, a research framework requires a flexible and relational enough approach to experiences on the ground. To this end, in arguing for

a focus on access in archival evaluation, an interpretivist research paradigm, as defined by Alison Jane Pickard, best encompasses the needs of assessing accessibility, particularly in regards to ontological and epistemological stances (Pickard, 2013, 11-13).

## What is Access?

The International Council on Archives (ICA) defines access as ‘the right, opportunity, or means of finding, using, or approaching documents and/or information’ (n.d.). These processes and means take various forms depending on the type of information and the type of use intended by the user. Access to a text in a library would require a means to physically transport the user to the building and the skills necessary to find it within the library’s system. To use the information found within the text, however, would require navigating copyright law and obtaining intellectual permission to properly use the material, a different aspect of accessibility in regards to obtaining information (Baumann 1986, 351).

Access, then, is a multifaceted process that holds physical, legal, and intellectual aspects (Baumann 1986, 351; Hamburger 2011). This is emphasized all the more in regards to information held digitally, where new developments in online organisation and retrieval capabilities provide both opportunities for new methods of access as well as increased risk in regard to intellectual property and privacy concerns, and where the distinctions between physical and legal access can be blurred (Shiri 2015, 178). However, the core basis of access, whether physical, legal, or intellectual, and whether in physical archives or online repositories, is in connecting interested users with information held in memory institutions, and it is in light of these connections that the ontological stance of access in context is fully explored.

Traditionally, archivists have tended to view access to records as being based on their provenance with a greater focus on tracing the history of the item rather than the needs of the user (Dooley 1992, 345). This approach to access can be advantageous

when determining who created the record and organising it within the archival hierarchy, and could provide secondary access for the public through the intervention of the archivist as an intermediary between the user and the documents (Beattie 1997, 87). Indeed, David A. Bearman and Richard H. Lytle argue that in terms of internal best practice, provenance-based retrieval systems increase access to the items held within archives for the archivist and the institution by streamlining the retrieval process (Bearman and Lytle 1986). Access in this sense is the systems and processes in place in an institution which professional archivists and librarians employ in their practice, and, at least in theory, can be taken as a universal standard used across a broad range of memory institutions. Access for the public is found primarily through the trained lens of the archivist.

This approach, however useful it is within those in the field, has come under review when considering its relevance to the wider public, particularly for those outside of the institution. Janice E. Ruth argues that archivists need to critically examine their traditional reliance on provenance-based processes and be open to alternative retrieval and access systems (Ruth 1988). In particular, reformulating access with a wider user base in mind than only professionals in the field is a necessary step in aligning memory institutions with modern day realities, where greater access to information is available to a larger scale of users and where service expectations made of public institutions are greater than ever before. In light of these changes, Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland urges archives and libraries to view access to its materials as a means of social interaction (Gilliland-Swetland 2000). By doing so, she argues that these institutions can better offer connective interfaces if their efforts are coordinated with other disciplines, thereby producing more points of access to a wider base of users. This, in turn, reorients the focus of archival access from provenance to the subject level in the record's hierarchy, theoretically providing greater flexibility in practical usage (Beattie 1997, 87).

Access as a means of social connection reflects the wider reimagining of the purpose of memory institutions in the eyes of their users, moving away from storage of past materials to the present day retrieval of needed information, as argued by Angelika Menne-Haritz (2001, 59). As part of this process, access itself becomes more available to the general public, with the need for the archivist as an

intermediary less essential than before (see Bureau of Canadian Archivists Subject Indexing Working Group 1992). Rather than formulating access as a system of retrieval, access is instead defined as an interaction between social elements, including relationships between user and user, user and material, and user and institution. This approach defines access as the connective links between user and information, taking into account the various pathways and avenues users have to their archives and libraries.

This diffusion of focus regarding the initial point of impact of access, however, naturally leads to various forms the process takes in practice. These forms depend on the specific contexts they exist within. A student seeking to borrow a book from a library has different needs and different aims from government officials seeking confidential data from an official repository. Access takes very different guises between these two examples, and it is here that a relativist ontological stance proves necessary in properly identifying what access means across the varied needs and motivations of both users and institutions, a challenge in the realm of cultural heritage experts (Doerr 2009, 477).

The reality of access for a researcher seeking an archival item entails membership of the archive, physical access to the building, and the skill set required to handle and approach the item. Yet this reality does not translate well to a general user seeking an online resource of digital photographs, where concerns over connectivity and online security determine how access is provided in that context. As a result, when investigating how access is defined and implemented, these definitions must be taken on a case-by-case basis, as the realities of each are dependent on their context. Relying on subject access rather than the traditional focus on provenance is an important step in accounting for these different realities, as access by subject provides more flexibility and agency on the part of the user in regards to how and when they obtain the material, and provide greater insight into the motivations of their use (Dooley 1992, 346).

## Subjectivist Epistemology.

If the realities of access are dependent on context, it is worth determining what users and institutions make up those realities. In a subjectivist epistemology, the interaction between subject and user is the essential point where knowledge is gained and, in regards to access, determining who is doing the interaction and for what purpose is important in understanding the term (Pickard 2013, 12).

Richard H. Lytle describes an archival system as made up of four groups: the material items and records held within the system; the users who make demands on the materials; the finding aids and retrieval systems used to obtain the materials; and those responsible for servicing the materials (1980, 65). The particulars of the makeup of these groups can change depending on the venue, such as the difference between online and physical repositories, but they represent most of the main actors and functions that exist in information management practice. When assessing what access is in any given context, identifying who fits into these roles will be crucial. Once the various components are identified, more specific markers of each context can be delineated depending on their respective needs and influences (Lytle 1980, 65).

Each interaction will involve different actors and different information. Even interactions taking place within the same institution will have different users or different records in play, even more so when taking into account the differences between vastly disparate memory institutions, such as the dissimilar purposes of a public library compared to an online database. Thus, it is important to keep in mind when evaluating access that access will appear differently case by case, and that instead of seeking broad strategies that attempt to tie together the various expressions of accessibility, a focused review that emphasises the interactions held within these institutions would hold more value (Gilliland-Swetland 2000).

## **Key Challenges**

Any evaluation of access in modern memory institutions must be taken with an understanding of the challenges these institutions face in its implementation. As these institutions transition from operating with a storage based purpose toward an interactive,

creative-based one, the conflict between traditional standards of preservation and greater access has increased in both quantity and importance (Menne-Haritz 2001, 59).

Correspondingly, memory institutions' accessibility strategies must consider issues of privacy protection, of scale, and of a variety of structural restrictions.

## Access and Privacy.

An important consequence of greater accessibility in memory institutions is the prominent role archives and libraries play in guaranteeing rights to free speech, information, and freedom of expression (Shepherd and Ennion 2007). Indeed, this role as stewards of public knowledge has increased public awareness and use of archival and library resources, as access to its records performs an important service in accountability and in ensuring social and historical justice (Jimerson 2009; Cox and Wallace 2002). However, access to information, particularly that of a sensitive nature, comes into conflict with personal privacy and data protection. This tension poses important questions for archives and libraries in implementing their accessibility policies and requires care on their part in addressing it.

At the core of this issue is that while public records and information held in memory institutions, many of which hold sensitive and personal data, serve a plethora of public goods, providing access to them carries the constant risk of misuse and exposure which carries the potential for major consequences for people's lives and rights (Čtvrtník 2023). At both the institutional and governmental levels, policies and practices have been put in place to address this tension. Redaction practices regarding personally identifiable data, publication schemes, and, in the United Kingdom, the institution of the Information Commissioner's Office, have all been put into practice in an attempt to provide access to publicly available information while staying in line with privacy legislation.

There will, however, always be grey areas where tension still exists, and memory institutions must always be aware of the complex interplay between access and privacy (Sillitoe 1998, 6). With online data banks and information programming in common use, combined with legislation requiring both openness and protection of personal data, the particulars of when and how access to archival records is granted are simultaneously



rendered harder to define and more important than ever (Robbin 1986, 168, 170-171, 175). Any evaluation of access in memory institutions must take into account the competing responsibilities they face regarding this conflict, and judge any policy or practice in light of it.

## Scale

Compounding issues in safeguarding privacy are the increase in scale archives and libraries are now working within. Both in terms of the amount of data being handled and the number of users interested in accessing them, archival resources are being stretched by greater demand (Kapsalis 2016, 2). Those resources, however, have often been unable to meet this demand, due both to the speed in which modern data is produced and by budget cuts and a lack of funding for the institutions charged with handling them (Evans 2007, 388). This has led to a backlog and resulted in less access instead of more. Meanwhile, a user public that has developed a greater interest in archival and library services while also bringing increased requirements of service on demand has put new pressure on these institutions. A growing expectation for every page in every document to be ready-made and available among the public, along with an assumption that these are easily and quickly available, provides a major challenge for resource-strapped memory institutions tasked with connecting these users with the items they wish to access (Evans 2007, 388).

Advances in the Information Age have played a major part in this process. Digital technologies and innovations have increased the amount of data in use, the routes of access, and the public's demand for both. Digital material is produced at a faster rate than its analogue counterparts and gaining access to them is quicker and, in many cases, easier for the user (Kapsalis 2016, 2). For memory institutions which must also ensure their records are safeguarded and in line with privacy requirements, the increased scale of practice provides challenges in terms of keeping pace, all the while having to learn proficiency in new realms of digital technology (Evans 2007, 388). Web-based access to digital records does indeed make access easier for the general public, but also applies pressure on their holding institutions to lower their barriers, barriers that exist to ensure best practice (Isaac and others 2008, 187).

It is imperative to understand the scale being dealt with. This entails determining how much data is being held, how much of it is being made available, and how many requests for access are received. In acquiring data from these evaluations, deciding whether to measure results based on the whole or within a certain cross-section of the data will provide clarity on how to navigate problems of scale.

## Structural Restrictions

In evaluating access in light of memory institutions, a clear and obvious challenge in evaluation would be any restrictions faced by users in obtaining the records and items held in archives and libraries. A report led by Caroline Wavell identifies several barriers to use and access (Wavell and others 2002, 58-59). These include institutional barriers, such as restrictive opening hours and charging policies, environmental barriers, such as difficult physical access to buildings, social barriers, such as the lack of skill required, and barriers of perception and awareness, which involve the belief among some in the community that archives and libraries are not welcoming of them (Butcher 2022). Cost becomes a barrier to access when users cannot afford membership fees to these institutions, or find paywalls are in place online. Policies that directly deny access to any group or the public at large will have clear implications in evaluating how their access systems are enacted, and provide clear boundaries in terms of evaluation (Butcher 2022).

However, beyond official barriers are social factors that serve to prevent prospective users from gaining full access to archival items. While an archive or a library can make its records freely accessible by official policy, if those who wish to access their items lack the required skillset to properly engage with them, they are still barred from properly attaining said records. Such a user would need to know what exists within the archive and understand where to find it among a multiplicity of catalogues, and, once found, would need to engage with a system of proper retrieval and handling. This can be confusing and frustrating for users, particularly for those who lack experience or who have disabilities that hinder their ability to grasp these systems (Pelan 2018). In many cases these users are unable to handle this process on their own, and, despite attempts by the field to move away from provenance based retrieval systems, they still find themselves dependent on the archivist for full access (Bureau of Canadian Archivists Subject Indexing Working Group 1992, 34).

Further, as memory institutions seek to engage with a broader user base, they must confront demographic realities regarding how they are perceived. Randall C. Jimerson states that archives have traditionally been run by those in power, and that archivists now have a 'moral professional responsibility' to ensure their selection policies include records of the marginalized (Jimerson 2009). Yet many institutions still lag behind when it comes to representation of minority groups. A survey of public library services in Newcastle and Somerset led by Rebecca Linley and Bob Usherwood in 1998 found that younger people, women, and ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in the archive user population (Linley and Usherwood 1998, 89). A similar study by Patrick Roach and Marlen Morrison on twelve English public library authorities noted that public libraries across England were failing to meet the needs of ethnic minority populations and that few services had established measurable objectives and service standards regarding equality and ethnic diversity (Roach and Morrison 1998, 76).

Findings such as these feed the perception that archives and libraries are privileged spaces whose records do not represent their communities and where they would be out of place (Wavell and others 2002, 59). These perceptions have led many in these communities to refrain from connecting with these institutions on the basis that they believe the items held there were not meant for their use. This mirrors circumstances elsewhere, as memory institutions across numerous countries wrestle with power imbalances and legacies of historical injustice (See Anderson 2005; McKemmish, Chandler, and Faulkhead 2019). If a perception of elite exclusivity persists, there is, then, a powerful social influence denying entire portions of society access, even when this is independent from official policy and practice, and evaluation efforts must account for societal factors that may not be obvious at first glance.

## **Access in the Field**

Memory institutions have formed connections with their community of users through means of instituting new organisation systems, increasing their access points, and by embracing a collaborative approach to accessibility. These strategies and initiatives aim to bring users and records closer together, creating the social links necessary for greater access in light of the demands and expectations of modern society.

Simplifying the requirements of access can remove barriers for those who lack the time or ability to engage with official archival retrieval systems. In the digital realm, aggregating information from a wide array of institutions can similarly create better access. John Pelan writes on the Scottish Council on Archive's plans to create a singular portal for accessing Scotland's archive collections, which would include records from universities, local authorities, and businesses (2018). Ian Johnston and Jane Stevenson have similarly worked within Salford University Library to ensure that all the various catalogues they held were available through a single search function by working alongside the Archives Hub (Johnston and Stevenson 2015, 44). Such a reorganization addresses challenges regarding skill sets.

Similarly, focusing on the finding aids and retrieval systems available to the user further renders access easier. Ali Shiri identifies Knowledge Organisation Systems (KOS) as a model for the effective and efficient organisation and retrieval of information (Shiri 2015, 178). KOS refers to a range of strategies for organising information based on discovery, and offers users a structure to facilitate item-level search functions. In light of the variety of information sources and formats in use, the need to create easily useable search systems becomes increasingly necessary (Shiri and Molberg 2005; Hodge 2000). Doing so, however, eases the burden of knowledge needed for access and facilitates increased use.

While institutions aggregate their information into singular interfaces, they have conversely increased the access points by which users can reach the said interface. Johnston and Stevenson note that, particularly in the online realm, a single route to access an institution's content is no longer practical or desirable (Johnston and Stevenson 2015, 44). In practice, archives have ensured their collections are available through major archival services, such as Archives Hub, or embedded links on the main website of their parent institutions. Such an approach increases the institution's reach, and thus, connects to a greater number of users.

Further, directly addressing challenges regarding perception, memory institutions have reoriented themselves within their communities and embraced a collaborative approach to building access. Wendy M. Duff and Jessica Haskell argue that memory institutions that embrace user-centric models of access integrate better to modern

realities of social media and instant access while also providing greater means of connections to under-represented groups (Duff and Haskell 2015). A 2001 Ipsos MORI survey attempted to go beyond the issue of how many people visit museums to understand 'who visits' and the purposes for their engagement (MORI 2001). It was this survey that revealed the shortcomings of memory institutions in regards to minority engagement, and emphasized the importance of forging new relationships with underrepresented groups.

Since then, work in the field has included research highlighting a designated community officer's role in developing a mutually supportive relationship with the wider community (Grut and Press 2015). Others have developed tools that improve hands-on access for local community organisations to archival catalogues (Ledauphin, Josi, and Siegrist 2020). Targeted approaches that take into account minority experiences strengthen ties between both, and the greater trust that results in increased access to archival records. Underlying this approach is the view of memory institutions as a common and public good rather than the protected property of an institution (Evans 2007, 394; Freeman 1984).

For example, Kristine N. Kelly, in her work on open access among art museums, found that in her study of eleven American museums, lowering restrictions and expanding access to a larger user base made negligible impact on their expenditures, and that 'the real and perceived gains far outweigh the real and perceived losses for every museum that has made a transition to an open access approach' (Kelly 2013, 24). Focusing on building social connections with their community, then, provides greater access by building trust and changing perceptions with a diverse base of users while maintaining their organisational processes.

## **Methodology**

### User Needs

Any evaluation of access must first consider whether the user has access to transportation

to an archive or library, or, in the digital realm, has a device with a connection to the internet.

Once proximity to the institution is established, a user needs the proper skill set to engage with the institution's retrieval system (Beattie 1997, 87). This can take the form of the archivists themselves who retrieve the item or an online system that connects the item and user. Determining the level of field knowledge the user has and the resulting level of assistance they need is important to consider.

Finally, cost must be considered. Institutions which require membership fees run the risk of excluding those with low income or no income at all. Even for institutions free to access, the cost must be considered when transport needs and educational resources incur expenditures that must be considered in any evaluation effort.

## Data Collection

To properly conduct evaluation into access, both quantitative and qualitative data is necessary, so a mixed method approach would be most appropriate. To understand how access is implemented in practice requires data on the number of users of a particular institution and the number of requests made. There would also be a need for a review of both items held within the institution in question and the systems they employ. These statistics would reveal quantitative data on the volume and scale of relevance to evaluation (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016, 127).

However, to properly understand the particulars of how access is both perceived and implemented, a qualitative approach is needed: to move beyond 'how many' to understanding 'who visits' (MORI 2001). When collecting data in this regard, the researcher must be careful to include in the data set those originating from diverse economic and demographic backgrounds to understand community access fully (Lilley and Moore 2013, 41). Combined with qualitative statistics, insight gained from these responses would provide valuable information on how and to what extent memory institutions are engaging with their community.

With regards to access, users will each have their own motivations and reasons

behind their interactions with memory institutions and any data must keep their context in mind. This entails understanding the demographic backgrounds of these users and the level of know-how and skill of each. Every case will be different and must be analyzed as individual cases before any overarching conclusions can be made.

## Methods

With empathetic interaction in mind, participant observation, focus groups, and surveys offer promise in providing the qualitative data needed for evaluation. Participant observation will provide important insight into understanding the particulars of access as it inserts the researcher directly into the context being studied (Patton 2002, 268). Though consent and privacy considerations must be taken into account, seeking to understand the context where access takes place best provides the data needed for interpretivist research.

These methods can be complimented by data extraction targeting membership and usage rates of targeted memory institutions. The aim would be to gain the quantitative data necessary to investigate the meanings and motivations in context of said results. Combined, conclusions regarding the interactions and connections formed between user, archive, and record can be gained.

## **Conclusion**

Access in light of memory institutions is the means by which users interact with the records held within them. The social connections formed by this process influence the perceptions, use, and policies of both institution and user and reorients the focus of how access is conceptualised. Evaluation efforts must investigate beyond retrieval systems and visitor numbers, and into the policies, decisions, and engagement efforts of these institutions regarding community engagement and outreach. They best do this by employing methodologies that properly examine the contexts where these interactions take place. Memory institutions would be best served by focusing their evaluation efforts on how they implement access, as it is through granting access to a pluralistic user base that archives and libraries can best navigate a fast changing world.

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# Let's Work Together: Towards an Active and Innovating Role of the Theological Libraries

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## **Helsinki University Library (HULib) in the Kaisa House**

Kaisa House has been HULib's central library for humanities, theology, and social sciences since 2012. It was a Herculean labour to bring 19 different libraries, both great and small, under the same roof.

In the beginning, the printed collections were still in the middle, and each collection had its area of the building.

But over time, the printed collections are gradually shrinking, and e-collections are growing. In fact, we no longer truly have any of our own new collections, as we rent most of our materials (package deals with annual payments).

Before the COVID pandemic, some seven thousand clients visited Kaisa House every day. Now the number is only about 3,800. Students and other library users are now more used to working from home, and with growing inflation, the price of transport has increased, meaning fewer people are making the journey to use the library in person.

## **HULib Serves Staff and Students**

In 2012, we chose a model to help us best serve, and keep in touch with, staff and students. Essentially, our number one priority is to help our scholars, staff, and students, and we are always looking for ways to improve in this regard.

We serve our clients in research data management, self-archiving (green Open Access), providing options for OA publishing, and so on. We have developed our search tools and efficiently informed our clients about new acquisitions and services and so on.

We consistently receive good ratings from our clients, but we cannot always be sure whether they really have time to follow our updates and know all that we are offering. It is difficult to reach them. They have their own routines and ways of searching for information, and often think there is nothing new to learn. The services we offer – so they say – are ‘good for students’, but by implication perhaps not so useful for staff.

## **We Need More Interaction**

The problem with our chosen service model is the lack of interaction. I think that a big university library should take a more active role in the development of information policies and research practices within that institution. I think that scholars should bear more responsibility for, and know more about, Open Access, particularly by self-archiving and actively using Sherpa Romeo. It is hard to see this as something separate from their portfolio and everyday scholarly work. The library should have the mandate to teach scholars about these issues at an early stage, and have this be part of their compulsory education. It does appear that we are moving in this direction, in terms of new scholars just beginning their careers, but those who did not start out with this mindset are perhaps not using our services to the maximum possible level.

## **This is Your Future Too**

I hope I am not right about this, because small is beautiful. I love printed books and small libraries. However I do wonder if, in the future, small and medium-sized theology libraries will be integrated into big university libraries, and individual seminary libraries will be drawn together into larger libraries to lower costs and provide better digital services.

I have some questions we here in BETH have already thought about. In the future we will all have to think about them in the wider context:

- How can we make the library space (more) attractive for clients?
- How should we promote knowledge of digital resources among scholars and students?
- How must Open Access and digitisation be promoted?

There are other questions I am sure BETH's members are discussing even now.

## **The Challenge Is Both Local and Global**

We are the mediators between the information itself and anyone actually (or potentially) interested in that information. Information is local and global and so is everybody interested in all this information. Thus, we are local and global too – connecting people and information.

## **An Example of How to Work Together Globally**

Helsinki University Library Critical Editions (HULCE) is a simple and practical way to create and publish an open and linked digital critical edition. HULCE promotes local and global digital humanities, interaction and cooperation between scholars, libraries, and digitizing institutions, and interest in ancient authors, old books, and manuscripts. Our pilot is a critical edition of Polycarp's letter to the Philippians: [https://libraryguides.helsinki.fi/hulce\\_epistula\\_polycarpi](https://libraryguides.helsinki.fi/hulce_epistula_polycarpi). When browsing the tabs, you will find an interactive and intensive environment to read this interesting early Christian document and the tools and ideas. HULCE makes it possible to study a classical document over the centuries, from the earliest manuscripts to the latest editions and studies, all in one interlinked space, accessible wherever you are in the world and whoever you are. This is how we might work together, and secure the future of theological libraries.

# The Fate of the Libraries of the Society of Jesus after their expulsion in 1767, and the Libraries of the Colleges of Córdoba and Montilla

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## Introduction

During the Modern Age, the history of libraries in Spain was that of the libraries of religious orders. A good part of our bibliographic heritage from those centuries was either printed by or edited within ecclesiastical institutions: its authorship and/or its subject matter was either religious or belonged to ecclesiastical libraries. Within religious orders, the book responds to the need to spiritually form its members on the path to personal perfection, but also to the interest in providing prestige to their institution. In fact, the library is inherent to the establishment of a convent, and the development and increase of collections is closely linked to the fate of said institutions.

During this same period, the schools of the Society of Jesus experienced great developments which would only conclude with their expulsion in 1767. The founding of a school altered the social, economic, and power relations of the population where it was established. It caused changes in cultural life, since the convent generated a great demand for printed books, boosting trade and encouraging the establishment of bookstores and even local printing presses. Very few libraries of the time were able to house the bibliographic wealth of the

ecclesiastical orders, and specifically of the Jesuit colleges; not even the private libraries of large noble families or institutions dedicated to teaching and study, such as universities and academies. Furthermore, the community libraries were equipped with a much superior organisation and had library staff, and they served, in one way or another, a much larger percentage of the population than any other, performing in some ways similar functions to a public library.

The foundation of the Santa Catalina de Córdoba School began to take shape in 1553, officially taking place on 24th January of the following year. Its foundation is closely related to the profession in the Society of Jesus of Antonio de Córdoba (son of Lorenzo de Figueroa and Catalina Fernández de Córdoba, counts of Feria and marquises of Priego). Antonio de Córdoba convinced his mother and his cousin, Juan de Córdoba, Dean of the Cathedral and a rich and influential person in the city, for this foundation. He also received some financial help from the city council. With all this support – 5,182 ducats annually – the school grew rapidly and in 1561 it already had 400 students.

For its part, the Colegio de la Encarnación de Montilla was founded in 1555, although its activity began in 1558. As in the previous one, the influence of Antonio de Córdoba as well as that of San Juan de Ávila were of great importance for its creation. In this case, the main financial support came from Catalina Fernández de Córdoba, II Marchioness of Priego, who also donated the Hospital de la Encarnación from which the school would take its name.

## **The Libraries**

We know the libraries of Córdoba and Montilla from the catalogues and inventories that were made as well as from the books that have been preserved. Most of the books identified from both libraries are currently preserved in the Diocesan Library of Córdoba (hereafter referred to as BDC).

For the Montilla Library we have a catalogue titled *Índice del Colegio de la Compañía de Jesús de Montilla* (BDC, ms. 35), completed on 20th July, 1749, just a few years before its expulsion, which gives us a faithful image of its content. The books are classified into nine subjects, each assigned a series of shelves within the library. Likewise, the entries are arranged alphabetically by the name of the book's author. Similarly, the Library of Córdoba was included in the *Índice de los Libros y Papeles que se contenían en la Bibliotheca del Colegio que fue de los Regulares de la Compañía de esta ciudad de Córdoba* (BDC, ms. 35). This is included in the inventory concluded and signed on the recto of the last folio on 18th January, 1773 by Pedro José González and Juan Moreno y Risques, commissioners of the bishop and the Royal Municipal Board in accordance with the Royal Decree of 6th May 1772 of Carlos III. It was this decree which ordered, alongside other measures related to the expulsion of the Jesuits from the kingdom, a detailed inventory of their papers and libraries. And finally, for both we have the *Índice de los libros de las casas de los jesuitas*, prepared in 1779 (BDC, ms. 109) which again includes their books arranged by the surnames of their authors.

The development of libraries, as seen in the following table, was intense during the 16th and 17th centuries, only to fall into deep decline in the 18th century. The fact that the Jesuits were expelled before the end of that century does not fully justify the decline in the acquisition of funds.

Century	Colegio de la Encarnación (Montilla)	Colegio de Santa Catalina (Córdoba)
XV	3 (0.06%)	38 (0.55%)
XVI	1,106 (23.42%)	2,674 (27.01%)
XVII	2,590 (54.85%)	2,785 (40.64%)
XVIII	464 (9.83%)	1,051 (15.34%)
Undetermined	559(11.84%)	306 (4.46%)
Total	4722	6854

[Table 1] Comparison of the number of works in the libraries of the Jesuit colleges of the Encarnación de Montilla and the Santa Catalina de Córdoba.



At dawn on 2nd April 1767, Antonio Serrano, mayor of Montilla, appeared at the College and communicated the expulsion order of Charles III to the twenty fathers and brothers of the community the Royal Pragmatics. They had to leave the building, which would be thoroughly searched. In addition to their clothes and personal objects, priests could carry breviaries, diurnals, and portable prayer books for devout acts. The procedures then began to determine the fate of the College and its assets.

By order of Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes, Minister of Finance, Municipal Boards were formed in all the towns where the Company had its headquarters. The purpose of these Boards was to understand the matter of the temporalities of the expelled Jesuits. The commissioned judge of each college, an alderman appointed by the city council, as well as the deputies and representative of the common, and an ecclesiastic appointed by the bishop or archbishop of the diocese, were to be part of this Commission. On 17th April 1769, the Council informed the Bishop of Córdoba, Martín de Barcia, that he must appoint an ecclesiastic of his confidence to be part of the Municipal Board of Montilla. On 20th April 1769, the bishop appointed the vicar of Montilla, Pedro Fernández del Villar, who, due to an accident, could not perform this function, and to replace him, the priest of the church of Montilla itself, José Pérez Cañasveras, was appointed. Martín de Barcia, despite having a Jesuit brother, was in favour of the extinction of the Company, when Charles III requested the opinion of the Spanish bishops in 1769.

To know the final destination of the books, we must wait until 1772. The libraries were ultimately sent to the public libraries of the episcopal palaces, themselves created just a year before by Royal Decree of Charles III. This 1771 decree established a series of exceptions:

- The books that had found another destination, before the publication of this Royal Decree.
- The libraries of the Colleges of Loyola and Villagarcía de Campos (Valladolid) would remain in these centres, which would become Missionary Seminaries.
- Libraries in cities with universities would receive Jesuit books.
- The library of the College of Toledo was to be used for the founding of a Seminary.

- All files and manuscripts were to be sent to the Archive of San Isidro el Real, in Madrid. Any temporary rights to such things would be classified according to the criteria of the Director of Royal Studies, the Librarians, and the Accounting Office.
- Before being sent to the episcopal libraries, a recognition should be made of those books that contain maxims and doctrines harmful to Dogma, Religion, good customs, and the regalia of His Majesty.

Furthermore, the Decree also declared restrictions, within the episcopal libraries themselves, to the access to books of Jesuit doctrine.

Regarding the library of the Jesuits of Córdoba, its transfer to the Episcopal Library was carried out immediately, along with some books from the College of Baena. However, moving the library involved more time and paperwork. First, before sending the books, some expurgation was considered necessary. But this plan for separating out the harmful books encountered obstacles in the Junta de Montilla, which, due to the opposition of the municipality, took a while to find a person capable of carrying out this task. In addition to the size of the library and the time required to review it, this task was complicated.

In October 1773, three lists of books that needed to be purged were sent from Madrid: books of rights, books prohibited by the Inquisition, and books on Jesuit matters. Finally, on 8th April 1774, Ignacio Crespo, an official of the Municipal Board, was appointed. He would, in addition to the selection, carry out the packaging and transportation of the books to Córdoba. The banned books found in the collection were delivered to Juan Moreno Ríquez, parish priest of San Nicolás de la Axerquía in Córdoba. Next, on 31st June of the same year, the shipment of the books was reported according to a document from the Diocesan Archive of Córdoba:

Monday, June 6, in the afternoon, the carts with the Bookstore and shelves will leave here; and the arrival will be Wednesday morning, because the first day will be mostly occupied with loading, according to the carter.

Upon arrival in Córdoba, it was necessary to temporarily collect the books at the city's old Jesuit College, as there was not enough space in the Episcopal Library to house the books, and work was required to expand its capacity. The Bishop ignored all the requests made from Montilla for the books to remain in the town, although in return he had to pay the costs of expurgating and moving the Library. The bill amounted to 2,063 reals and 18 maravedies.

## Losses

The various vicissitudes that have surrounded libraries since the expulsion have caused numerous losses of books. We know that books did disappear from the Montilla Library. After studying the catalogue we quantified a loss of 1,862 works, 39.5% of the Library's total. We can group the losses into:

- Duplicates;
- Colourful books with numerous illustrations such as emblematic works or paintings, and books in Spanish, more affordable for the general public;
- Books of great bibliographical interest, which were probably stolen to be sold to booksellers (some have subsequently been found in national and university libraries).

Currently, the Jesuit books are preserved in the Diocesan Library of Córdoba where they can be consulted by the general public. They are described in its online catalogue, and in the Collective Catalogue of Spanish Bibliographic Heritage. They are also the subject of various investigations, and have been shown in numerous exhibitions such as *Amor a lo visible: tras las huellas de la Compañía de Jesús en Córdoba* in 2018, or *La Biblia y los humanistas: un viaje a la cultura del siglo XVI* in 2022.

What we see is that, despite the expulsion of the Order, its books live on. Whilst these books have been removed from their original home, they are able to continue providing a service to society, and facilitating reading for those who would otherwise be without access to such important books.

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# The Reorganisation of the Library at Mariastein Abbey: An Adventure with a Happy Ending

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In the summer of 2013, the congregation of the Benedictine monastery of Mariastein (Switzerland, [www.kloster-mariastein.ch/en/](http://www.kloster-mariastein.ch/en/)) had to decide whether to close their library or to radically reorganise it. For the monks of Mariastein, who live their lives according to the Rule of St Benedict and the maxims 'ora, labora et lege' (pray, work and read), this moment was a great challenge. It was not easy to admit that, despite all the work done for the library over the past 50 years, its condition in the summer of 2013 required such a critical decision. And it was quite understandable that there were feelings of resignation, anger, and incomprehension when the monks talked about the library. In 2013, far too few people were aware that the state of the monastery library was a reflection of the history of the monastery since 1874. The monastery had already been dissolved in 1798 during the revolutionary period, then rebuilt at great expense from 1802, but the second dissolution took place in 1874 as a result of the Kulturkampf (cultural war). However, the Swiss government made a commitment to maintain the pilgrimages. The abbot and monastery settled down in Delle, France. In 1906, they established their new home in Bregenz on Lake Constance. In 1941, driven away by the Nazi regime, the monks took refuge by returning to Mariastein. In 1971, the monastery was rebuilt under civil law following a cantonal referendum. The complete renovation of the abbey complex began. The project was successfully completed with the renovation of the church in 1999-2000 (Benediktinerkloster n.d.).

From 1874 to 1941, and until 1971, the Mariastein monastery was always geographically fragmented. Some monks remained in Mariastein to look after the pilgrimage, while the majority of the monks were in exile in Delle and Bregenz. In order to maintain a foothold in Switzerland, the monks of Mariastein also took over the care of the Karl Borromäus

College in Altdorf (canton of Uri) in 1906. In Mariastein, Delle, Bregenz and Altdorf, spiritual reading and the reading of scientific and literary works were an important part of Benedictine life, so libraries were established in all the places of activity. With the restoration of the abbey in 1971, the monastic life of the monks moved back to Mariastein. In 1981, the Bregenz and Altdorf sites were abandoned and their libraries also moved to Mariastein. In that same year, Father Lukas Schenker, the former Abbot of Mariastein, began to merge the three existing library collections into one. Given the volume of books, this was a Herculean task, and it is only thanks to a team of library specialists that the reorganisation is now complete.

In 2013, none of those involved could have imagined that, in 2022, two full library halls with a large number of uncatalogued books and a further 11 external depots of uncatalogued books would once again be a functioning library in a new spatial design, with a catalogue that is now available online worldwide. The new library electronic discovery tool is found at [www.klosterbibliothek-mariastein.ch](http://www.klosterbibliothek-mariastein.ch).

The journey from an unusable collection of books with many duplicates to a library with a clear profile in terms of its collection, preservation, and use was only possible thanks to the Conventuals' realisation that a library is something very dynamic that goes beyond the physical space and needs to be constantly maintained. This dynamic began with the development of a collection concept. It comprises the following focal points:

- Dealing with duplicates: Duplicates are not kept, with the exception of publications on Mariastein and works that are always needed in the monastery (breviaries, commentaries on Rules of Saint Benedict, and so on);
- Restrictions on the acquisition of illustrated books with the exception of works on Mariastein;
- Dealing with damaged and broken media;
- Dealing with the estates of confreres;
- Acquisitions and donations: donations are only accepted according to the criteria of the collection concept;
- Reduction from 757 journal titles to 98 current and 211 expired journals;
- Determination of the thematic focus of the reorganised monastery library on the areas of theology, history, fine arts and music, literature, philosophy, and natural sciences.

The collection concept was approved in 2015 and made it possible to define the strategic objectives of the reorganisation. In addition to the collection concept, all aspects of the reorganisation were described in a few words.

1. the monastery library has adequate, secure rooms, and a reserve of space that will ensure its further development over the next 30 to 40 years;
2. the monastery library has an effective collection concept that guides the further development of the library and grants the persons responsible for the library the corresponding competencies and duties;
3. the holdings of the monastery library are catalogued and can be accessed and used in the rooms of the monastery library according to their physical nature (historical book holdings or modern editions);
4. the monastery library has an appropriate library management system for cataloguing and use;
5. the implementation of the reorganisation will take 10 years.

Since the start of the actual reorganisation in January 2016, the collection concept and strategic goals have been the ‘common thread’ guiding all steps of the reorganisation, which have been described in a comprehensive concept and whose implementation has now also been calculated in terms of working hours and financial costs.

The start of the actual reorganisation was difficult. While the Conventuals approved the measures to reduce duplicates and journals, as well as the preservation of the collection, they rejected the first feasibility study for the architectural reorganisation for cost reasons. It took more time and initial results in the restructuring of the library collection before a second feasibility study by Co.Architekten Bern was approved in 2019 (Co-Architekten n.d.). The initial feasibility study envisaged merging the two existing library rooms and presenting the catalogued media of the non-historical book collection (books published after 1850) in an open-shelf library. The new library room was to become a place for reading and studying, which thanks to its spatial concept could also be used for other events organised by the monastery (such as readings or concerts). The historical book collection and the music collection, on the other hand, were to be stored in a space-saving underground room with a mobile shelving system. The main reason for this was the proximity to the monastery's underground archive, which has been suffering from a lack of space for years. A new secure room would also have relieved the pressure on the monastery archive.

In the second feasibility study, of 2019, the construction of an underground archive room with a mobile shelving system was abandoned. Instead, the two library rooms were to double as the archive room. Instead of freestanding shelves, the open-shelf library was now given a mobile shelving system. This does not apply to the historical book collection, which is kept under lock and key in different mobile racks. The old historical bookcases from the 19th century have been incorporated into the new spatial concept and the idea of an open-shelf library: they are used to display the current year's periodicals and new acquisitions of monographs, and provide quick access to the most important encyclopaedias and Bible commentaries. Architecturally, they provide the framework for the newly created reading room at the centre of the now combined halls. Visually, this design element is arranged in such a way that the mobile shelving system, which now houses the entire monastery library and music collection, appears unobtrusive.



[Image 1] A new library room with study and reading space (photo by Gabriella Hanke Knaus)

With the decision not to expand the library in terms of space, but rather to condense it structurally, the collection concept had to be supplemented by internal guidelines for individual sub-collections. In the theology section, all books on catechetical practice (teaching materials) were removed because, on the one hand, they no longer correspond to current teaching practice and, on the

other, none of the monks are still active in catechesis. Similarly, in the case of works with several editions, it was decided to keep only the first edition and the most recent edition, since the latter usually revise earlier editions. To date, other internal guidelines have been added (e.g. for books with dedications and facsimile editions). The decision to classify books and new acquisitions not yet catalogued in a new system according to the library's subject areas and the size of the book has also contributed to consolidation. In contrast to the old



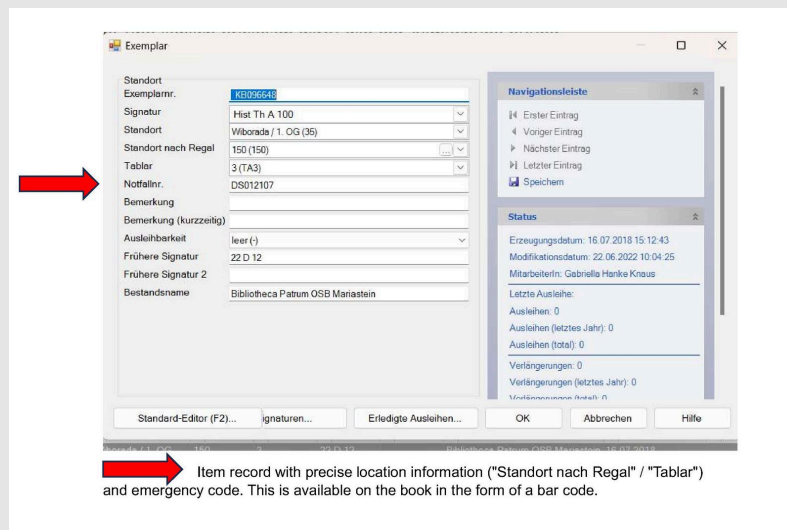
shelving system, this has resulted in a very practical space-saving arrangement. The old system was based on the principle of assigning book signatures according to *NUmerus Currens* and was not very user-friendly for searching. All these internal guidelines complement the new collection concept, and help to ensure that all steps remain traceable for the Convention once the reorganisation is complete.

A major challenge in the reorganisation was the fact that 11 external book depots outside the library were full of uncatalogued books that needed to be compared with the existing card catalogue in the library hall. To transport these from an external book depository to the card catalogue was logistically unmanageable. We decided that the books should not be brought to the card catalogue, but rather the catalogue to the individual book depots. This was only possible by retro-converting the card catalogue and transferring the existing catalogue data to the library management system netbiblio from Alcoda (Bern, [www.alcoda.info/homepage](http://www.alcoda.info/homepage)). For the Mariastein monastery library, the method of outsourcing data entry by the company Medea ([www.medea.eu](http://www.medea.eu)) was chosen. All the cards in the card catalogue were digitised by Medea and entered into netbiblio by their team. The Mariastein monastery library team defined the standard for input to netbiblio based on RDA and MARC21 and supervised Medea's work. The retro-conversion process lasted from May 2017 to the end of 2018. With each data delivery by Medea, the electronic library catalogue of the monastery library was expanded by several hundred titles. For the library team at Mariastein, this meant that the logistical burden of triaging the external book repositories quickly decreased. This was also due to the fact that it became possible to use netbiblio offline in the external depots. What was originally presented as a solution to the logistical problem of efficient triage and de-duplication of book collections outside the library premises turned out to be the basis for the online catalogue of the monastery library ([www.klosterbibliothek-mariastein.ch](http://www.klosterbibliothek-mariastein.ch)), which has been accessible worldwide since 2022.

The electronic library catalogue was also used to manage the logistics of removing all the books during the library's renovation. The new layout meant that after the remodelling, no book would be in the same place as before. This meant that neither moving boxes nor pallets could be labelled with the previous shelf numbers, as these would no longer exist after the move. The new arrangement of the books in the new rooms had to be taken into account even before the move. This was the only way to

ensure that the right moving box was delivered at the right time to move the books. Thanks to the collaboration with the company Docusave, which is advising on the conservation of the collection, their object recording system could also be used for the logistics of the removal and re-stacking, and linked to the library management system netbiblio. This system (docusave, [www.docusave.ch/en/services/logistics-and-inventory](http://www.docusave.ch/en/services/logistics-and-inventory)), originally developed for emergency situations in libraries and archives, ensured that every book in the monastery library could be located by barcode throughout the entire process of removal, return, and new location in the monastery library, regardless of shelf information or shelf marks. As the books were moved, the new location of each book was continuously recorded using the Docusave object recording system. Once this work was completed, the information could be imported into netbiblio using the data import function. Once the books had been moved, the library team had a precise overview of where each book was located in the redesigned library (shelf and tray number). This logistics system enabled the library team to avoid weeks of additional work after the books had been shelved. This has been particularly beneficial for the historic book collection (books published before 1850), which was only recorded in an emergency inventory before the renovation. Thanks to the unique individual identification of each book with a barcode, its location can now be found immediately when cataloguing. This is particularly valuable in the case of multi-volume works, which were not recognised as such in the emergency inventory, but are now physically grouped together in the cataloguing process. Mariastein monastery library will continue to use the 'dual' system of signature and barcode for new acquisitions and new catalogues: the

[Image 2] A new system (photo by Gabriella Hanke Knaus)



purpose of the barcode is no longer to facilitate removal logistics, but to serve as a permanent object code for emergency rescue, which hopefully will never be necessary.

Although the reorganisation of the monastery library is now largely complete, the library team will keep its dynamism. Instead of moving and building, the team is now planning to better address the public, whether through readings from the book collection, interactions with the Instagram account (@mariastein\_klosterbibliothek), or perhaps other forms of dialogue. Mariastein has been given a new lease of life; indeed, perhaps the title of this paper should not be 'an adventure with a happy ending' but rather an ongoing one.

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# To Saved the Orphaned Ones: The Contribution of the Theological Library in Katowice to the Presentation of the Bibliophile Legacy of the Polish Clergy<sup>[1]</sup>

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A book requires an owner to fulfil its purpose and remain relevant. If a book is deprived of its owner, it may be forgotten or even destroyed. The absence of a book can have serious, negative consequences for understanding the functioning of the surrounding world and its processes. Books are a source of knowledge and therefore play an important role in maintaining society's level of development. Unfortunately, situations may arise where a book loses its owner, such as when the owner passes away or when institutions close or move. When this happens, the book becomes orphaned and must be saved by individuals or institutions that are friendly to their former owners. The Theological Library in Katowice<sup>[1]</sup> has been dedicated to this mission for many years (Uniwersytet Śląski n.d.). In this article we will present our library's contribution to preserving the bibliophile heritage of the Polish clergy.

Our library is one of the founding members of the Federation of Ecclesiastical Libraries (Fides), which currently unites 84 libraries of university theological faculties and higher seminaries in Poland (both diocesan and religious). Fides in turn belongs to BETH.

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

The Theological Library in Katowice is not an independent institution, but structurally it is part of the University of Silesia – the largest university in the region, educating approximately 25,000 students. In addition to the main library, the University Library consists of six specialist departments, each located within particular faculties of the University. The resources of the Theological Library can be used not only by the community of the Faculty of Theology, but also by students and employees of other faculties of the University of Silesia, as well as by priests and nuns serving in the Archdiocese of Katowice. In justified cases, books are also lent to lay persons not affiliated with the University.

Although the Theological Library in Katowice is quite a young institution – established only two decades ago – its collection of books has been gathered over the course of a century. Its history is intertwined with that of the Katowice diocese. At the same time as the Apostolic Administration for Upper Silesia was established in 1922, two libraries were also established: one in Katowice for diocesan priests, and one in Cracow for clerics. For over 50 years, both collections grew independently. After years of effort by Katowice bishops, the seminary was moved to the diocese's capital in 1980, bringing tens of thousands of volumes of books from Cracow. The seminary library took over the diocesan collection of over 19,000 books. When the University of Silesia's Faculty of Theology was established in 2001, the Silesian seminary library was transformed into the current Theological Library for clerics, lay students, and scientists (Czakański 2004, 283-292). The Katowice Curia still finances book purchases, but the library has also acquired books funded by the University in recent years, since becoming a branch of the University of Silesia Library. As of the end of 2022, the Theological Library in Katowice contained 134,000 books, almost 28,000 journal volumes, and 5,500 documents in a special collection, including old prints. In addition, readers with a library account can use – free of charge – the electronic resources of more than 180 scientific databases (journals and books) to which the University provides access, both within the library and from home.

The collection of the Theological Library in Katowice is acquired through purchases, exchanges with other libraries, and donations. Among the donors we can distinguish three groups: the first being private individuals (such as students, University staff, authors, and bibliophiles); the second being organisations (such as church institutions, museums, associations, and publishing houses); and the third group

consisting of priests, especially those on the University staff, with specialist knowledge, who have often managed to collect a wide resource of specialised literature during their careers. It is the collections of such priests that constitute the largest part of the donations received by the library. The circumstances of their transfer are often different: the ending of an active academic career, a change of residence and the associated difficulties in transporting and finding a place for the collection in a new location, a reorganisation of a private library, or the death of its owner (Warząchowska 2008, 399-400). Orphaned collections come to our library most often in accordance with the wishes of their owners (often so stated in a will), or as a result of the decision of his family members or academic colleagues. In this way, the resources of the Theological Library in Katowice are enriched with valuable collections, the value of which is determined not only by rare publications, but also by the history of the collection, the person of the founder and/or current owner, and other such factors (Warząchowska 2008, 399-400). Of the collections taken over from priests, the three most valuable are legacies separated from the rest of the resources of the Theological Library and are kept in rooms specially reserved for them.

The best classified is the collection donated to our library by Father Professor Wincenty Myszor. The collection was donated to us after his retirement in 2012. The reasons why the Professor decided to donate his legacy to our library can be considered pragmatic. In a letter to the Library Management documenting the donation, he said: "First of all, I donate books that are currently needed by my doctoral students and myself, staying in Katowice at the retirement home. I hope that the collection of my books, kept in the Theological Library, will allow me to continue my scholarly work, in the form of technically easy loans." (Warząchowska 2015, 292) Along with the books, the Library also received bookshelves from the donor's apartment. This collection can be considered the most valuable in our library's resources due to the presence of many rare publications, especially foreign ones, often unavailable in other libraries in Poland. Professor Wincenty Myszor was a renowned patrologist, researcher of the history of early Christianity, as well as an expert and translator of Gnostic texts. He developed the first Polish textbook for learning the Coptic language, as well as the first Polish translation of the Gospel of Judas. He was associated with the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw and with the University of Silesia in Katowice, where he organised and directed the

Faculty of Theology, established in 2001. Professor Wincenty Myszor had a collection of highly specialised books that included around 6,000 volumes. Among them is a prized series of multilingual versions of texts from Nag Hammadi, including numerous Apocrypha (Muc 2013, 208-11).

Professor Myszor's book collection gave rise to the Patristic Reading Room, one of two specialised reading rooms which have been created in recent years at the Theological Library in Katowice. The collection was organised according to 25 thematic categories, including such criteria as type of document, geographical and cultural area, period, or scientific discipline. Importantly, the appearance of the departments in the Patristic Reading Room mirrors the original appearance of the home library of the collection donor (Muc 2017, 158-59).

Father Professor Myszor's book collection has its own separate catalogue, based on a Wikipedia template. The catalogue allows users to search for bibliographic records by the titles of individual books and series, authors' names, thematic categories, and keywords (Myszor n.d.). The Wincenty Myszor's Centre for Research on the History of the Church is responsible for maintaining this catalogue. The centre is run as a Foundation by the Professor's brother and is located in the Patristic Reading Room of our Library. The Foundation's tasks, as outlined in its statutes, include taking care of the Professor's book collection and conducting publishing activities. The Foundation has been publishing a series called 'Studia Antiquitatis Christianae' for several years, which provides patristic sources with commentary based on the collection of books in our Patristic Reading Room. Therefore, the collection not only has its legal foundation, but also provides research material for Polish patrologists.

Another interesting collection similarly separated out from the main library holdings consists of donations taken over by the Theological Library of Katowice from Father Professor Remigiusz Sobański, a world-famous canonist and priest of the Archdiocese of Katowice. Received in 2011, his legacy consists mainly of documents in the field of canon law, history, theology, and philosophy and counts about 9,000 volumes, which makes it the largest donation given to our library (Gawinek and Gawlik 2017, 34). Professor Sobański was connected with two scientific centres – Warsaw and Katowice, where he stayed, worked, conducted

research, and thus, he surrounded himself with books. For many years, the collection was divided into two apartments: in Warsaw and Katowice. After the death of the Professor, it was merged into one collection and, according to the will of the owner, it was transferred to our library (Kołodziej 2013, 203). Of great importance in the research work of Father Sobański were the overprints of various articles, speeches, homilies, interviews, and judgments announced in the press. The extensive scientific and academic contacts Father Sobański made (many fellow lawyers, canonists, and theologians from all over the world) systematically also send him their own articles, showing the Professor's international reach. These materials form a collection of several volumes. Each overprint has a precise bibliographical description with an indication of the scientific source. A characteristic feature of Father Sobański's collection is the 'added value' that does not appear elsewhere in the main Library holding. Looking through this collection, in many positions we will find remarks, notes, explanations, comments, and reflections, all handwritten in the margins by their owner. These additions show a deep analysis of the text, a great inquisitiveness on the part of the Professor, and a critical engagement with the theses contained. In these notes, the researcher shares his personal 'hot takes' and reflections while reading. Professor Sobański's notes are interesting research materials, which may indicate the method of work of a scientist and the way of his scientific investigations (Kołodziej 2013, 205-07).

The only collection that is not housed in the Theological Library in Katowice is the Collection of Father Sobański. It is kept in a room on the second floor of the building of the Metropolitan Curia, which is located opposite the Library. The room was originally used by Father Sobański as an office, and it still contains his original wooden desk from the interwar period as well as a chair and computer. Professor's personal belongings, such as gramophone platters, a briefcase for documents, and a collection of pipes from various parts of the world, are also on display in the office.

Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły's collection, donated to the Theological Library in Katowice in 2007, is completely different from those previously presented, Although like the gifts donated to our library by Father Myszor and Father Sobański, the legacy of Archbishop Wesoły has been separated from the main collection and is kept in a separate room. The Archbishop spent most of his life in Rome. He served as rector of St. Paul's church and hospice, and was a member of the Pontifical Council for the



Pastoral Care of Migrants and Travellers. As a pastor of Poles abroad he made numerous foreign travels and knew several foreign languages. All this earned him the nickname 'Bishop on Suitcases'. His collection is unique in that it is multilingual and consists of Polish works published in different countries around the world (Kołodziej 2009, 145-47). It focuses on Polish emigrant literature, covering topics such as Polish history, culture, and the pontificate of John Paul II. The collection contains many rare publications, including occasional works published by various Polish institutions operating abroad. These books are difficult to find in Polish libraries due to the low number of publications released, and the censorship during the communist period (Sąsiadek 2018, 314-17).

The reasons why Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły decided to transfer his bibliophile legacy to the Theological Library in Katowice should be obvious from the deeply established philosophy of his spiritual life. In a book interview, he expressed such sentence: "This is why a cleric studies liturgical texts in order to explain them to people. That's why he learns about life's problems to help a man in confession. That's why he reads a lot, to get the most out of life. In order to explain as it should be – short and simple – he has to know a lot, a lot to learn." (Warząchowska 2015, 282) Archbishop Wesoły's words were fulfilled, because clerics and lay students of theology often reach for publications from his collection.

The circumstances of acquiring the presented collections led to many publications containing handwritten dedications, usually written by the authors of the book for its owner. The most valuable in this respect is the collection of Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły, in which we can find about half a thousand signed works. Among them are the autographs of clergy and people from the world of science, culture, and politics, mostly Poles. For example two of the most valuable are the dedications of two Popes – both John Paul II, and Benedict XVI from the time when he was still a cardinal. In addition to the dedication of the Pope from Poland, there are also inscriptions by other saints, blessed and candidates on the altars, such as Blessed Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland between 1948 and 1981 (Sąsiadek 2018, 314-17). Today these autographs should be treated as relics.

The collections of Father Sobański and Father Myszor also contain dedications from authors, mainly associated with foreign research centres. In Father Sobański's

collection, for example, there are entries from Hans Kung, a Swiss professor of fundamental theology, and Dominique Le Tourneau, a French professor of canon law. Meanwhile, in Professor Wincenty Myszor's patristic collection, a dedication written in both the alphabet and Coptic language stands out among many others.

As we come to the end of this article, it's important to recognise the integral role that the Theological Library in Katowice plays in preserving the cultural heritage of the local community. This institution has acquired many collections of Polish clergy (other than the specifics already mentioned), which include valuable bibliophile legacies. The Library gives books without owners a new lease of life by making them available to readers, allowing them to continue their mission of disseminating knowledge and conducting research. The collections donated to our Library have been saved from dispersion, disappearance, and even destruction. The Library not only provides storage space but also professional care, including the development of the collection, cataloguing, and maintenance of damaged documents.

To maintain the completeness of the collection, books from the collections of Father Myszor, Father Sobański, and Archbishop Wesoly are not available for loan but are instead accessible only to readers in the reading room. These collections not only help students and researchers acquire specialised knowledge, but they also serve as research material for librarians, historians, and theologians. (Additionally, they can also be an excellent source of information about the lives and activities of their former owners, as noted above.)

The multilingualism of the publications and the circumstances of their acquisition and inclusion in the collections transcend national, cultural, and religious borders. Collections that were amassed outside of Poland over decades, such as the book collection of Archbishop Wesoly, have now found a home in the Theological Library in Katowice – in the heart of the diocese from which the owners of these collections originated.

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## How Oswald Chambers's Wife Compiled and Self-published His Books

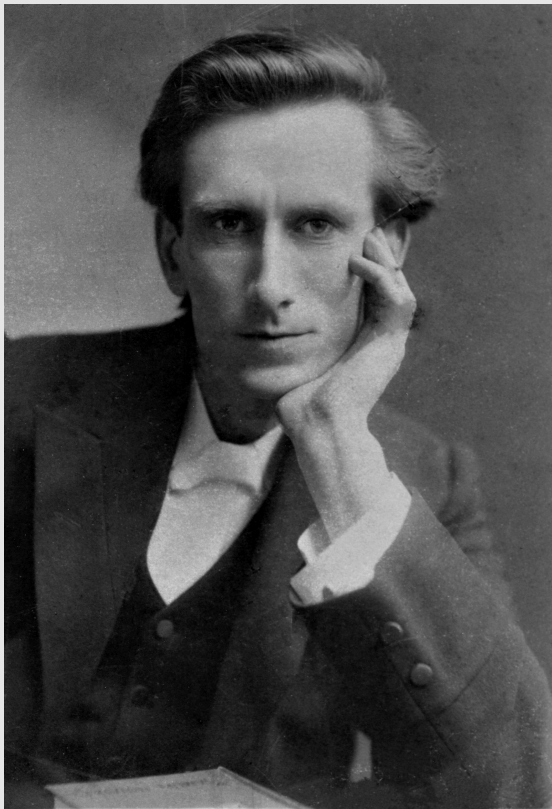
**Michelle Ule**

Biographer of *Mrs. Oswald Chambers: The Woman Behind the World's Bestselling Devotional*

"I want us to write and preach; if I could talk to you and you shorthand it down and then type it, what ground we would get over! I wonder if it kindles you as it does me!"

Oswald Chambers (McCasland 1993, 171)

When fledgling British author and Bible preacher Oswald Chambers wrote those words to his



[Image 1] Oswald Chambers (photo provided by Michelle Ule)

fiancé in 1909, he had no idea what those hopes kindled. He only oversaw three books published in his too-short lifetime: *Biblical Psychology* (1911), *Studies in Sermon on the Mount* (1915), and *Baffled to Fight Better* (1917). Twenty-seven more followed, all with him listed as the author. But who wrote them if Chambers died in Cairo, Egypt, on November 15, 1917? The answer is in fact a master compiler/editor who fashioned seven years' worth of shorthand notes into a legacy still in print today: Gertrude "Biddy" Chambers.

But why? As an act of love for her late husband and for God. Long before she ever met Oswald Chambers, Biddy (nicknamed "Beloved Disciple," by Chambers, which he shortened to 'BD', slurred into Biddy) worked

as a secretary. A dedicated and focused woman, she had perfected her shorthand skills by the time she met Chambers. Indeed, Bidy could ‘take down’ words at the phenomenal rate of 250 words per minute. (The average person speaks at 125 words per minute)

Attracted to the pretty young woman who shared his desire for ministry, Chambers took special note of her keen mind, understanding heart, and practical abilities. He particularly appreciated her skill because, as a popular Pentecostal League of Prayer speaker, he already believed “the most lasting of all preaching is with the pen” (McCasland, 1993, 255). It was a match made in heaven. Their partnership began during their American honeymoon when Bidy first picked up her pencil and sat in the back at the camp meetings Chambers conducted that summer. She soon found she retained his teaching better if she wrote down what he said. Later, when they opened the Bible Training College (BTC) in London’s Clapham Common in 1911, she worked as both the school’s ‘Lady Superintendent’ and Chambers’s personal stenographer.

Throughout the college’s five-year duration, Bidy took notes of nearly all of Chambers’s lectures. When she accompanied him to League of Prayer meetings, she picked up her pad and went to work. Afterwards, she typed up her notes and often fashioned them into magazine articles. As Chambers wrote in the preface to the original 1911 edition of *Biblical Psychology*: “The reports were taken by my wife and sent on to the editors of *The Revivalist* [magazine] who now, out of the generosity of their hearts, are publishing them in book form” (Chamber 2000, 133). He subsequently used *Biblical Psychology* and his studies in *the Sermon on the Mount* in 1912, which was also organized by Bidy as BTC textbooks.

The Chambers family closed the BTC in 1915 when they moved to a YMCA soldiers’ mission outside Cairo, Egypt. Whilst there, Chambers gave many talks, and several magazines, including *The Revivalist* in the US and *Spiritual Life* in the UK, published articles Bidy



[Image 2] Bidy Chambers (photo provided by Michelle Ule)

organised from notes taken during these YMCA talks. Her husband's death in November 1917 left Bidy in charge of the YMCA camp at Zeitoun. She received hundreds of condolence letters. Overwhelmed by the tasks of replying to so many – often 100 messages a day – Bidy edited one of Chambers's talks into a small pamphlet and sent it in reply. The pamphlet in turn inspired return letters, often asking for more of Chambers's wisdom. Using her notes and with the YMCA's financial support, she compiled a monthly pamphlet for the rest of the war. Soon, the YMCA was mailing 10,000 pamphlets a month to all Allied theatres of war.

Bidy also sent both the pamphlets and a copy of *Baffled to Fight Better*, which was published in 1917 by Nile Mission Press – the book Chambers had finished reviewing mere weeks before his death – to former BTC student C. Rae Griffin. As the director of a London publishing house, he already had turned some of Chambers's BTC talks into saleable pamphlets. He began reprinting Bidy's pamphlets, as well as *Baffled to Fight Better*. Proceeds supported the Zeitoun camp ministry. Surprised by the enthusiastic response, Bidy examined her notes for other inspirational writings. Among Chambers's papers, she found a list of pithy statements he wrote daily on a camp blackboard, such as, "Don't waste time asking God to keep you from doing things – don't do them!" (Chambers 2000, 1141) Taking 365 of these sayings, Bidy created a narrow booklet suitable for a soldier's breast pocket. She called it *Seed Thoughts Calendar*. Nile Mission Press and the YMCA gave away thousands of copies. Bidy's sense of God's direction and guidance in preparing the pamphlets brought great satisfaction. Each finished project convinced her she could produce many books from the Chambers notes she took down in Egypt and her shorthanded notes stored in London.

Ten years later, she explained why Chambers's teachings and insights were essential in the introduction to *My Utmost for His Highest*, citing Robert McCheyne's words:

"Men return again and again to the few who have mastered the spiritual secret, whose life has been hid with Christ in God." It is because it is felt that the author is one to whose teaching men will return, that this book has been prepared, and it is sent out with the prayer that day by day the messages may continue to bring the quickening life and inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Chambers 2000, 734).

The success of the pamphlets, and letters from so many readers, convinced Bidy that she needed to produce more books. As she wrote in her diary, "It is a joy to step out in complete dependence on God and to look forward to the new things he will open up" (Chamber, B, 1919).

Oswald Chambers did not believe in life insurance and left his wife and child no financial resources. After her return to England in 1919 with her five-year-old daughter Kathleen, Bidy visited former BTC students. Many donated funds to produce more Oswald Chambers material. Once reunited with her trunks full of BTC notes, Bidy turned to Griffin for advice. His publishing house only produced technical journals, but he had good relationships with other publishers, paper merchants, printers, and bookbinders. Griffin introduced her to a Christian book publisher. Unfortunately, the publisher saw nothing exceptional in Chambers's material and declined to help. In her diary, Bidy described herself as "undone" and left the meeting feeling foolish. Further reflection led her to another decision: "We must simply go on our way with God. It seemed like a closing of a chapter ... I feel a clean space now, liberty only to go along the lines of spontaneous moral originality" (Chambers, B. 1919).

By choosing to continue without a publishing house's backing (aside from Griffin's encouragement), Bidy became a self-publisher 75 years before the birth of Amazon.com. This meant that Bidy controlled the content, design, page style, and covers, but she also needed to arrange for marketing and distribution.

As a Zeitoun soldier wrote in her obituary many years later, "Mrs. Chambers, left homeless, without means of support, and with a small daughter to educate, started absolutely from scratch ... yet nothing daunted her in her enthusiasm to get her husband's message circulated" (Pulford 1966). Within a week of her discouraging appointment, Bidy completed a new version of *the Seed Thoughts Calendar*. With Griffin's help, she arranged its physical publication with London printer S. W. Partridge, Ltd. The calendar appeared in London bookstores in 1921. With that, Bidy Chambers was 'in business'.

Some might argue that Oswald Chambers's 'insurance' was the material stored in Bidy's notes. In compiling and selling books, Bidy might have made enough money to support herself and her daughter. However, she did not see Oswald's talks that way. Bidy felt Chambers's life and work were gifts. God gave Oswald



the insight and skills; the ideas belonged to God. To that end, she turned all earned book revenues into more books. As her only child, Kathleen Chambers later explained in her interview with David McCasland: “The money aspect was always so careful where my mother was concerned. We didn’t spend the money or use the money except for putting the books in print. Nobody, as it were, sort of made anything out of the books except to have them continually in print” (McCasland 1993, 255).

When caring for her daughter required more funds, Bidy opened a boarding house for university students in Oxford. After making breakfast for her four boarders, taking her daughter to school, and running household errands, Bidy compiled *My Utmost for His Highest*. The idea of writing a devotional may have come from her lifelong reading of the Bagster family’s *Daily Light on the Daily Path*, or possibly from receiving a copy of *Streams in the Desert* from her friend Lettie Cowman. Bidy designed *My Utmost for His Highest* in the same style. She provided a title, quoted a snippet from a Bible verse – usually less than ten words – and then used several paragraphs from as many as three different lectures by Chambers to augment and underscore the Bible verse’s theme. In this way, Oswald’s words instructed, but Bidy’s mind compiled them into a complete message. She selected the book’s title from one of Oswald’s ‘signature’ remarks: “We have to realize that no effort can be too high . . . It must be my utmost for His highest all the time.” (Chambers, 525) By this time, Griffin had arranged for all the Oswald Chambers books to be printed by Alden Press of Oxford and distributed to bookstores by Simpkin Marshall of London, the largest book wholesaler in the Commonwealth. Friends again donated funds to pay for the book’s publication. First published in England in October 1927, *My Utmost for His Highest* has never been out of print.

Following the success of *My Utmost for His Highest*, Bidy’s friends formed the Oswald Chambers Publication Society, Ltd. (OCPA). Serving as a team of advisers, five people assisted Bidy with business-related decisions. As the Chairman of the OCPA, Bidy insisted she be allowed to give away books to whomever she wanted. Bidy Chambers focused on ministry, not revenue. Whilst some would say this was no way to run a publishing house, it worked for the woman who could read the shorthanded notes that produced the books.

Whilst we know that OCPA is still operating now in 2024, World War II nearly brought an end to the Chambers enterprise. In July 1940, with a nervous eye toward Hitler's activity on the European continent, British insurers sent letters to all British publishing entities, including OCPA, to warn of potentially devastating results if they did not carry proper insurance. In accordance with 'the teaching of the books' (to trust God designed all events, including potential catastrophes, according to his plan), the OCPA voted not to insure their unsold Chambers books. In addition, OCPA wrote to Simpkin Marshall to advise them if a fire happened in their warehouses, OCPA would not seek a claim against the book distributors, "even if circumstances caused them [OCPA] to regret the decision" (Chambers 1940).

Alas, the 'Crematorium of the Books' occurred on 29 December 1940 (Holman 2008, 30). Under a bomber's moon, 24,000 high explosives and 100,000 German incendiaries were released with the aim of destroying St. Paul's Cathedral. Fire watchers saved the cathedral but could do little about the surrounding publishing warehouses. What the fire did not burn, water sprayed by firefighters finished off, leaving 4,000,000 destroyed books. The damage included the Simpkin Marshall warehouses and all the unsold Oswald Chambers books.

As Chairman, Bidy Chambers maintained a simple attitude: if God wanted the work to continue, it would. If God wanted to end the production of the books, God would tell Bidy what he wanted her to do next. However, God had other plans for Chambers's books. Copies of unsold books and printing plates turned up in unexpected places. By the war's end, OCPA had found enough plates to reprint and put on sale all of the Oswald Chambers books. *My Utmost for His Highest* was smuggled into German concentration camps throughout WWII. Copies of the devotional slipped through the Iron Curtain with 'God Smuggler' Brother Andrew. Translators ultimately translated the devotional into 47 different languages.

As Bidy herself wrote to a friend long before her 1966 death, "The books go out all the time, and God still blesses the messages" (1957). Indeed, *My Utmost for His Highest* continues to encourage, challenge, intimidate, and bless people to this very day at [www.utmost.org](http://www.utmost.org), thanks to Bidy Chambers.

## About the Author

Michelle Ule is the biographer of *Mrs Oswald Chambers: The Woman behind the World's Bestselling Devotional*, as well as *Overflowing Faith: Lettie Cowman and Streams in the Desert*. She is also an historical novelist, including *A Poppy in Remembrance*, a WWI coming-of-age novel featuring Oswald and Bidy Chambers. Learn more at her website, [www.michelleule.com](http://www.michelleule.com), where she has published more than 100 blog posts about the Chambers family and *My Utmost for His Highest*.

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## dans les yeux

**Dan Kim**

Graduate Theology Student, Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

“The thing about being a cradle Catholic is that there comes a point when you go to Mass, take Eucharist, and go to Confession and all you have in your heart is hatred. But you know what? I just think it’s better to do the shit even if I don’t give a shit. And then after some time, you realise that just doing it is of more value than not doing the things...”

This isn’t the normal kind of conversation you sit down to in an English pub, but neither is it that exceptional. Particularly in this kind of city. Claire sported a thick Irish accent, lubricated by two ales which compressed the characteristic sing-song lilt into a foghorn that resounded in the wood-panelled front room of the King’s Arms.

Alister had just come in from the rain after what some might call a ‘domestic’ at home. The foul weather was fitting for his mood. She had said she just needed some time to be alone, and, as in the past, Alister respected such wishes and vacated the home to his wife’s solitude. Or was it to run away? Should he have stayed and pursued her heart with gentle words and tenderness? Perhaps, but he had tried in the past and come up against bitter barbs of passive aggression and clenched shoulders which he always interpreted as hatred. He normally prided himself on his ability to de-escalate conflict and to draw out laughter from her to act as a balm to the fight. But he had raised his voice, which he seldom did. When he raised his voice, that was always the sound of defeat and the point of no return, at least for the next twelve hours. She was attracted to self-control and level-headedness. An angry man was an unattractive one.

So once again, Alister had found himself in the familiar embrace of the King’s Arms.

He'd reliably find Stephen here, and in fact, had messaged ahead of time to see if they could get a final drink before the bells rang calling for final orders. As Alister walked in, he saw Stephen standing at the bar already buying four largers with an apologetic look on his face.

"I'm sorry..." Stephen began. "I know we planned to have a chat, but I ran into some colleagues after Mass and ended up sitting with them. Do you mind?"

Alister shrugged, "Of course! Don't worry about it." Secretly frustrated but gratefully taking the tankard from his hands. The two men walked from the bar to the front room of the pub, dimly lit with inefficient light bulbs covered by dark blue cotton shades. Maybe they were trying to recreate what it must have been like to burn paraffin oil. It did, however, create a dream-like, clandestine aura. Incandescent orange light filled the dark room such that the room itself was immersed in the hue of ale. Tables were crammed ever so slightly too close to each other. Rectangular oak tables for four were arranged around the outside of the room; round tables with cast iron tripod legs filled the centre. Dark wooden stools with red-upholstered tops accentuated the warmth of the room, not that you could see any of the tops as they were all occupied.

The room was heaving. You couldn't walk through the room without rubbing against the backs of patrons. Alister and Stephen inched their way through the treacle of noise, making sure to not knock over drinks. Stephen, carrying three glasses as a trinity between his hands, was moving with particular anxiety and skill. The wooden floor, the wooden walls, and the wooden ceiling amplified every voice until the room was a cacophony of voices and laughter. Two women were waiting for them at the table. Despite the noise, as is often the case in these kinds of rooms, when the two men sat down, they were in a secret cabin; four individuals huddled together straining to hear each other speak, yet delighting in the intimacy of the inner circle.

"...And earlier this week, those fucking Russian Orthodox guys really pissed me off!", Claire continued. She suddenly caught Alister's eye, "Wait sorry, you don't know them! They're great guys, I love them, I promise. I live with them! They throw great dinner parties. I mean, sure, some of them are Putin-loving Russian nationalists but most of them are great." Stretching out her hand, she shouted, "Nice to meet you, by the way!"

Stephen quickly introduced Alister to the table. First to Claire, the Irish cradle Catholic living in a house of Russian Orthodox men in this University town. Then to the only other woman at the table, Chloé, yet another Roman Catholic. She was a Parisian, both in origin and in spirit. Slender, dark-haired, porcelain skin, vacantly holding an unlit cigarette in her right hand with elbow-on-table and hand twisted out as if from a 1950s smoking ad. An air of aloofness. She was a young graduate historian come to research some Medieval manuscript or another, who had found herself thrust upon this strange gaggle of people that night. She had struck up a conversation with Claire coming out of Mass who had invited the poor woman out. Chloé was not one for crowded claustrophobic spaces, and she had not expected such colourful conversation from Claire and would have rather made her way home. However, she had said to herself earlier that week that she would make more of an effort to meet new people so refrained from leaving. She was inwardly pleased to see another person join the table who could potentially shift the dynamics of the conversation. Of course, she did not give any of this away. Instead, she relied on the hope that her discomfort and insecurity would be interpreted as mysterious and intimidating, as most men often do of attractive women. Alister smiled, offering his hand to Chloé. She took it with gentleness and nodded, returning the smile. Meanwhile, Alister laughed to himself. Sitting amongst three intensely Catholic Medieval historians, it could have been the start of a joke. At least this would be a good distraction and meant that he could fall into the pillow-talk of meandering pub conversations.

“Cheers, friends!” Stephen said, handing out the drinks. Alister took his drink and mechanically clinked glasses with Stephen and Claire.

“*Dans les yeux*”, He suddenly heard from his left. He turned to see Chloé holding up her drink which he interpreted as an invitation to touch glasses. He instinctively tried to do. She pulled away her glass.

“*Dans les yeux!*”, she said again, with insistence. Alister looked at her with a flash of confusion. Seeing this, she explained cheerfully, “Ah, you have to look in the eyes, ‘*dans les yeux*’, when you cheers someone, otherwise it’s bad luck for seven years”. Her French accent was, again, out of a 1950s cigarette ad or a film noir.

“Ah, is this a French thing?” Alister said with a smirk. “Sorry, I did French at school but was never good at it. In fact, England is awful at teaching languages. I did it for ten years and all I have to show for it is that I can tell you that I went on holiday to America and I can maybe ask you ‘where is the swimming pool?’. They didn’t care much to teach any social etiquette, particularly drinking etiquette to 13-year-old boys”. A classic ice-breaker when talking with French people. Chloé gave a gentle, magnetic laugh.

“Well, now you know. So, *dans les yeux!*” she said, holding up her glass again. They touched glasses *dans les yeux*. She noticed he had warm, dark eyes. Alister found himself caught off guard.

---

8 April 1904.

*The man stumbled into his room grasping at ink and paper. The window was open and the cool desert air exorcised the oppression of the noonday sun. Aleister Crowley had been in Cairo for over two months in search of the hidden mysteries that those bourgeois, capitalist Golden Dawn had claimed to have for so long. They were frauds. Middle-class Londoners playing druid. He had always thought he had been set apart for a special purpose. He had felt this since he was a child. “You are the great beast of 666” he had heard in a dream several years ago. He was to be the great leader of the new Aeon of history. The secret knowledge of magick was apocalypsed to him and the Gods were with him and had honoured his devotion to the pursuit of wisdom. He had read all the works of Éliphas Lévi, the great French occultist of the 19th Century and had fully aligned himself with the pansophy of Hermes Trismegistus - That himself, the great Moon of Egypt. However, those frauds in Europe had emptied him of his power and reduced him to pure ceremony and play. They had turned the great powers of heaven into a watered-down Enlightenment sham. They didn’t know what true power was. They didn’t know what lay in the depths of the human spirit and his loins. That was why he was here, the cradle of true spiritual power and wisdom, the ancient lands. And tonight he was overcome. Undone. He fell at his desk, hands trembling.*

“Who is it that speaks?” he whispered into the silence.

“Behold! it is revealed by Aiwass the minister of Hoor-paarkraat.”



*The man scrawled on paper. "Come forth, o children, under the stars, and take your fill of love! I am above you and in you. My ecstasy is in yours. My joy is to see your joy."*

*The ink flowed. The dark figure slumped over his desk prophesying his purpose. Heavenly knowledge began pouring into his open mind and manifested through his fingertips. Has there ever been paper more blessed by such illuminations? The man shook with delight and rapture. He was the vessel of light. A new aeon was about to break forth upon the earth. An aeon of freedom, liberation, and delight; the old must pass away, the new must come. As above, so below. As above, so below.*

*"Invoke me under my stars! Love is the law, love under will. Nor let the fools mistake love; for there are love and love. There is the dove, and there is the serpent. Choose ye well! He, my prophet, hath chosen, knowing the law of the fortress, and the great mystery of the House of God.*

---

*"Curse them! Curse them! Curse them!  
With my Hawk's head I peck at the eyes of Jesus as he hangs upon the cross.  
I flap my wings in the face of Mohammed & blind him!  
With my claws I tear out the flesh of the Indian and the Buddhist, Mongol and Din.  
Ballast! Ompehda! I spit on your crapulous creeds.  
Let Mary inviolate be torn upon wheels: for her sake  
let all chaste women be utterly despised among you!  
Also for beauty's sake and love's!  
Despite also all cowards; professional soldiers who dare not fight,  
but play; all fools despise!  
But the keen and the proud, the royal and the loft; ye are brothers!  
As brothers fight ye!  
There is no law beyond 'Do what thou wilt.'  
"Do what thou wilt, that is the only law"*

---

"These Russians!" rolled on Claire. "They had asked me to cook for St Guthlac's feast day. So I made them a whole pot of beef stew for the evening and spent 40-fucking-

pounds on this meal. Then their dear blessed Patriarch of Jerusalem ordered a Holy day of fasting all of a sudden. So there I was with beef stew for ten people in my kitchen. I don't even eat beef! So I took it around to the Catholic chaplaincy trying to get rid of 5 litres of the stuff and wasted my entire Tuesday." The table listened joyfully and obediently.

"Guthlac? He was the English Catholic monk, wasn't he? What did he do again?" Chloé chimed, trying to pass the baton onto someone else. Alister took it up.

"He was one of those hermit monks up in Northumbria. Quite an intense guy. He was a soldier before God called him to the monastery, but later, he ended up deciding to live on an island by himself to devote himself to prayer and fasting - proper ascetic. He was one of those hermits who fought a tonne of demons and apparently 'cleansed the land' of evil forces."

"Look at you Ali, we'll make a Medievalist out of you yet!" Stephen said gleefully.

Chloé was intrigued, "What do you do, Ali?"

Before Ali could get a word in, Stephen exclaimed, "Ah! Ali here is a Theologian! One of the nicest and smartest guys I know, but unfortunately, he's a dirty, dirty Protestant!" The last words were said almost shouting over the noise of the room but loud enough to turn a few heads. Confused heads no less. Stephen was several drinks in.

"You know what, Ali? I don't even know what you do." Stephen non-sequitured. Alister liked Stephen when he was like this. No decorum needed, no filters, no veneer of Christian sensibility. He also appreciated Stephen doing the introductions for him. Ali hated talking about himself. He was always afraid of being seen as narcissistic and self-aggrandising, qualities that he found utterly repulsive perhaps precisely because they were barely dormant within him.

"Don't listen to him. Neither that nice nor that smart", Ali said winking at Stephen, turning to Chloé. "I'm just doing a bit of reading around 20th-century Latin American authors and what theological concepts they're using in their writing. I've just spent enough time with these guys to have a little of Guthlac knowledge."

“Interesting! which authors? For me, my favourite book is 100 Years of Solitude. Have you read it?” Chloé brightened. It was the first time this evening that she felt she could contribute something to the table. She was, however, embarrassed that she had just let her English grammar slip. “Have I read it? Of course! It’s one of my favourites.” Alister said, leaning in and surprising himself. He tentatively began to explain his research which quickly turned into a gush as he noticed Chloé also leaning in to listen and responding *dans les yeux*. By this point, they were practically having to speak into each others’ ears to be heard above the noise. Warm breath and the smell of hair casting a spell. Meanwhile, Claire and Stephen had withdrawn to gossip about the Russians.

Alister was becoming increasingly familiar with this kind of magnetism. He had never been a confident or particularly charismatic person, and it was only in the last several years he had found his footing. Particularly when it came to women, he had found his voice and had noticed himself garnering more attention from more women.

It’s often the case that a man in his late twenties, particularly a married man, begins to experience greater attraction from younger women. From insecure, irresponsible boyhood, he can be tended to and pruned by a devoted woman who helps them become twice or thrice the man he would have been had it not been for their influence. He becomes an attentive, emotionally literate, and probably more successful and handsome human individual. And, of course, this is precisely her intent and desire. She is investing some of the most valuable years of her life in the promise of a partner who will be the father of her children and the lover of a lifetime. The twisted irony is that the new man the woman has birthed in him, by her sacrifice, and faithfulness, are the very things that put all her labour at risk. He begins to receive the attention of women that he would never have dared approach at twenty-two years old; the temptation arises. He then contemplates plundering and stealing away the inheritance that his wife had been saving, and laying it, golden and shining, at the feet of a younger, more enticing woman. And yet, this man is a fool for there are few things more unappealing, more repulsive to a woman than infidelity and desperation. And so the golden treasure he has stolen from his wife is alchemically transmuted into lead and mercury that slips through his fingers and poisons his soul. Alister knew all this because Stephen had been one such man. Yet he found himself intoxicated by the warmth of her face, occasionally feeling her lips brush his ear as she spoke. Alister gained a measure of self-awareness. Out of decorum and a sense of

self-awareness. Out of decorum and a sense of inner virtuous obligation, he dropped into this clandestine conversation a small anecdote about his holiday with his wife earlier that year.

“Where is she tonight?”, Chloé asked, pulling back slightly. Immediately, Ali was annoyed with himself for breaking open the hermetic chamber of this intimacy. He brushed it off. “Ah, she’s at home finishing off some work.” At least he had felt like he had done his duty to fidelity. The conversation felt aborted.

“Have you heard about the Americans who are trying to cancel the phrase ‘Anglo-Saxon’”, Ali heard Stephen exclaim suddenly, and rather randomly. Ali and Chloé turned to see Claire rolling her eyes with her whole head.

“What is it this time? Honest to God, I can’t stand those Americans. Just because they have the cash they think they can dictate everything everywhere. What’s their stupid reason this time?” Her voice rang with sarcasm with slightly too much sincerity.

“Well, this is actually quite a funny story”, Stephen continued. He had clearly had this up his sleeve for occasions just like this. “A couple of years ago, there was an Anglo-Saxon conference in Hawaii. As in, a convention for Medieval Historian scholars studying the Anglo-Saxon period”.

“Sounds riveting,” I chimed.

“Oh, it really was,” Stephen parried. “So there they were. Hundreds of old, white academics in their suits with their papers presenting on the new archaeological dig in, I dunno, Coldingham monastery. They rock up to the convention centre and turns out that the ‘Anglo-Saxon Conference’ had made its rounds in the American White Supremacist circles.” Our eyes lit up as we leaned in. “Turns out, some American racist groups had started using the term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ in their White Nationalist propaganda and had thought this conference was for them and all turned up together en masse!” Cracks of laughter peeled around the table. “And so, since then, the American Academy are really skittish about using the phrase. They say it’s racist.”

“So what else do they suggest?” Chloé asked.

“Oh. They have a whole bunch of different suggestions.” Stephen’s eyes twinkled. “My favourite is ‘the Germanic tribes who migrated to England in late antiquity.’”

“Oh for fuck’s sake! Rolls off the fucking tongue doesn’t it?!” Claire came in abruptly, but Stephen seized the conversational reins again one last time.

“The irony of all this is the fact that the majority of English academics - the actual Anglo-Saxons”, emphasising each word of the phrase, “are very much in favour of keeping the term!” Claire turned serious, “Those Americans! They talk and talk and talk about decolonising their curriculum and they’re just imposing their own warped 21st-Century-Imperial-Pax-Americana-Supremacy. It honestly makes me so angry.”

Stephen began to smirk. He enjoyed getting a rise out of Claire. Claire had been a friend that he had stolen from his ex-wife. Or perhaps she had stolen him. She had found Stephen to be more interesting and a better conversation partner than his ex-wife had ever been. So, after Stephen pursued the young student he was supervising, and after his marriage broke down, and after all their friends, predictably and reasonably sided with her, Claire took it upon herself to continue drinking with Stephen on nights like this. Stephen was grateful for this, though he never expressed it. He was grateful that she never condemned him or threw him aside. Yet, he was also grateful that she would throw verbal tridents straight through his heart every time his now-pathetic love life came up. “Shouldn’t have ploughed into that other girl now, should you, Stephen?”, she would jab. This wounded Stephen every time but he enjoyed the absurd sadism of it. Perhaps because he felt like he deserved it.

Tonight, however, Stephen was content in winding Claire up like a Victorian toy soldier and letting her loose on the pub. It’s not often you find people with equal parts sheer intellect and unadulterated indignity. Once she got started, there was no stopping the colourful train of polemic, but shockingly well-thought-through verbal freight. Claire continued to rage. Stephen egging her on with more niche anecdotes about such-and-such Americans making this-and-that faux- pas. There are few things more unifying in the British Isles than a shared disdain for our brethren across the pond. People sitting at other tables began to look over at the playful vitriol that was flowing from our table.

Chloé was once again becoming weary and bored, looking in the direction of Claire but into the middle distance. She had her left hand wrapped delicately around her empty drink with dregs still sitting at the bottom of the glass. Her head was resting on her right hand while she fondled her cigarette in her fingers, the tip making small circles around her ears. She had been enjoying her conversation with Ali, but he had to go and ruin it by mentioning his wife. He had withdrawn since. The English are so rigid, she thought. Of course, she had no intention of doing anything with the poor man, but attention and connection are frightfully rare things. She tried to catch his eye throughout Claire's outpouring only to be met with warm yet restrained smiles. Ali meanwhile was somewhat grateful to Stephen and Claire's double act, yet he was furiously aware of Chloé dark eyes as he tried to keep attention on Claire and Stephen and laughed at the right cue. He had regained his composure, yet was desperate to return to the warm breath and leaning bodies. The room was now a fever pitch of noise. Claire was almost shouting expletives about the Americans. Stephen was clapping, finishing off his fifth drink of the night. The orange light was looking increasingly red as more bodies filled the room and dark coats covered the wooden tables and seats. In the other corner of the room was a table of ten men crowded around a table for four who would occasionally burst out in elephantine laughter that overwhelmed the room. Some of them would occasionally look across the room at the table full of student girls and start gesticulating big movements while telling some forgettable story about their week. There were couples huddled together with only the small round tables between them. Heads close, hands held, and exchanging sweet kisses and words. One man was sitting in a dark corner with book and pen, looking studious and severe. He would occasionally look up and around the room perhaps trying to catch someone's eye with the hope of striking up a serendipitous conversation. Or perhaps he was looking up in disdain at the clamour of it all. The room was a pressure chamber of blood and life.

"Do you want a smoke?" Chloé had turned to Alister, *dans les yeux*.

Alister didn't smoke. "Sure."

---

Circa. 701.

*He had defeated countless demons upon this rock and upon this selfsame rock he had built his palace of prayer and heavenly warfare from humble stone. The deceitful One had come in many forms in his life and he had resolved to purge it from these lands and from the plains of his own inner sanctum. Even the, so-called, people of God had not been safe haven for his desire for holiness. He recalled in his early years how his brothers, yes, his brothers of Repton, had called unto him while in prayer.*

*“Brother Guthlac! Brother Guthlac! Come! Join us in our merrymaking. Thou art too solemn. Didst not the Lord himself turn water into the finest wine at Cana? Didst he not offer his blood in the selfsame manner? Didst he not speak through the prophet Isaiah and say ‘Come, receiveth wine and milk without cost’? Join us for our cup overfloweth.”*

*He had refused, holding firm to his devotion to prayer. His brethren had hated him with a deep hatred. He had wept when he left his brothers and yet his heart was filled with joy when he had begun his life of solitude here on Crowland.*

*There was no room for such libertine freedom in the Kingdom of Heaven. He had remembered the example of great Anthony of the Desert who devoted himself to prayer and simplicity, and of the great Lord Christ himself who in the desert was bestowed with spiritual power to defeat the evil one. How could his brothers have been so foolish? Had they not learnt from the example of Coldingham? A terrible shame for such a great monastery to have come under the judgement of the Lord. It was but 20 years ago that it was consumed by fire because of the lewd behaviour of the sisters who adorned themselves like brides and looked upon the brothers as suitors. Those who do not master the fire of desire will succumb to earthly flame and ultimately to the eternal fire. Such was the example of the great saints of our generation who, when fire came to burn their homes to the ground, their great sanctity protected them from harm. Indeed, no wonder that the tried and faithful servants of God should have power over ordinary fire.*

*Since the beginning of his solitude, the eternal liar had come in all his craftiness. On one occasion, he had come in the form of a holy man to teach Guthlac how to fast. He had sought to deceive Guthlac to fast excessively so as to deprive him of the power to pray!*

*The Lord does not wish such things upon his servants. On another occasion, Satan carried him to the gates of hell itself where, before him, he witnessed such horrors and sufferings that would cause him to fall into an eternity of despair. The Lord however, strengthened the courageous soldier to cast out the enemy from his mind and bring him back to the land of the living. All these years, the hermit had sought the face of the Lord and had found the burning eyes of the Living God.*

*This evening, however, the air was different. The wet cold seeped under the woollen cloak he was wearing. There is no escape from such Northumbrian winds. The cold was no ordinary cold. The visionaries have often spoken that hellfire is matched in equal measure with a realm of demonic ice. Such qualities were manifest.*

*Suddenly, apparitions of evil spirits appeared before Guthlac's eyes in manifold shapes and creatures and beasts. Ravens come to tear his eyes, lions to sheer at his flesh, bulls ready to drive their horns through the very belly of the man. His eyes widened and his courage melted. He flailed his arms about him. Surrounded by such a great multitude, his blood was transfused with despair. "Hadst thou abandoned me, O Lord?" the man cried out. The spirits descended upon his body and spirit, fabricating the most awful cacophony of noises to deafen the man. The ground began to tremor around him and he was once again reminded of the awful visions he had seen earlier in his life. He desired for this hurricane of evil to subside. In a whisper, he spoke out the familiar words that he had used long-ago to drive out the demons who once owned his island. "O most wretched Satan. I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ who banished thee from heaven, to desist from this tumult".*

*Then, as quickly as it came, the apparitions vanished into empty air like smoke; like the morning mist upon the ground. He lay, as dead, upon the heather.*



## A Sword Pierces My Soul

**Mary's Lament over Simeon's prophecy (Luke 2. 25-35)**

**Hannie Riley**

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

Is this a blessing or is this a curse?  
What's Simeon saying?  
Joseph, do you hear it?  
His words are too huge for my understanding.  
Didn't he just say,  
"He is a light to reveal God to the Nations"  
and "The glory of your people Israel"?  
What is this then!

My eyes are filling with tears,  
Legs are trembling with dread.  
Hold my hand tightly, Joseph, squeeze it hard.  
A prophesy over my precious little baby...  
My own flesh and blood, born from my virgin womb.  
"All generations will call me blessed."  
Blessed, not cursed!

How can this be, a sword pierces my soul?  
Oh no, woe to me.  
What steps will these little feet take?  
What life is destined for this innocent frame?  
Fear's choking me.  
My soul is fainting.  
Into pieces every bone is breaking.  
My anguished wails are covering the land.  
Like Naomi, may I be called Mara

Oh, Gracious God, have mercy on me.  
With this sword, pierce my eyes first  
that I may not see.  
Grant me a short life,  
may I not witness such things.

See, Lord, your servant is in deep distress.  
Quivering with fear,  
Spare me, Lord, your servant.  
Yes. Your servant, favoured one,  
As you are with me.

In you, I take my refuge.  
Give my heart stillness  
like morning dew settling on quiet pasture.  
I humbly kneel once again as before.  
From the lips soaked with tears,  
“Here am I, the servant of the Lord.  
Let it be with me according to your word.”



Thistle  
by Hannie Riley

## Catte Street, Looking towards the Radcliffe Camera and the Bodleian

**Daniel Drury**

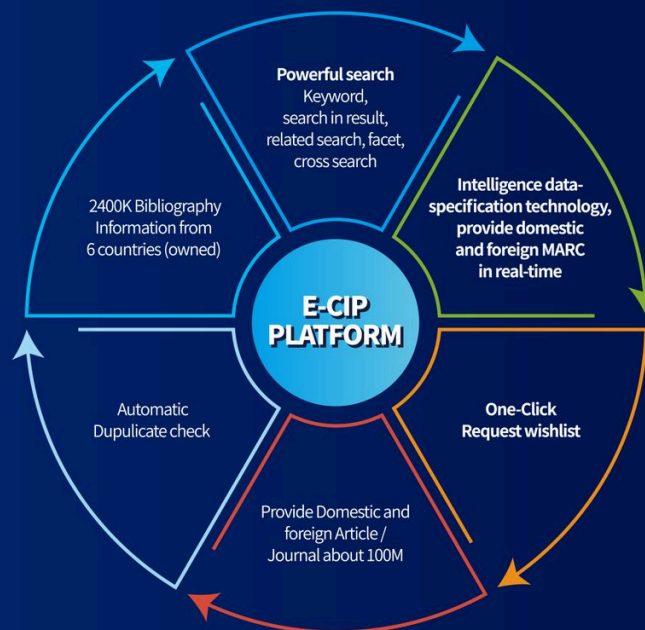
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## Atla Annual 2024

**Location: Hilton Long Beach, Long Beach, California, USA**

**Dates: 19th June - 22nd June 2024**

Atla members have met annually since 1947 to develop their skills and connect with their colleagues in religion and theology. Atla Annual has over 300 members, exhibitors, and international guests who meet in June every year and take part in over 100 programmes such as workshops, panels, exhibitor showcases, meetings, and diverse worship services.



With its long history and rich programming, Atla Annual has established itself as one of the must-attend events for librarians in religion and theology. This year 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 Long Beach, California and online, from June 19-22, 2024, for a hybrid event with multiple onsite & online options.

Please see more details at <https://www.atla.com/blog/registration-is-open-for-atla-annual-2024/>.

Atla Annual 2024 kicks off on the afternoon of Wednesday, June 19th with a plenary address by Dr. Amir Hussain, Professor of Theological Studies with a focus on the study of Islam at Loyola Marymount University, followed by an opening reception with our exhibitors. Dr. Lynn Silipigni Connaway, Executive Director, Research at OCLC will speak on Friday afternoon, focusing on redefining the library experience to meet the expectations and needs of their changing communities, after two days filled with concurrent sessions. A closing reception for our in-person attendees will follow Dr. Silipigni Connaway's address.

The full conference schedule, including the concurrent sessions, is published via <https://atlaannual2024.sched.com/>.



# The 52nd Annual Conference of BETH

## Sustainability in European Theological Libraries

**Location: Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Dates: 18th-21st September 2024**

BETH is delighted to announce the upcoming BETH Conference 2024, nestled against the breathtaking backdrop of Sarajevo – a city renowned for its rich history and stunning landscapes, providing an inspiring setting for discussions on sustainability.

As you explore the city's picturesque streets and multicultural heritages, you'll discover parallels between its resilience and the enduring nature of theological knowledge across various religions.

Embrace this unique opportunity to gather in the vibrant cultural hub and engage in enriching discussions on the theme of Sustainability in Theological Libraries.

## ABTAPL Spring Conference 2025

**Location: To be confirmed**

**Dates: 10th - 13th April 2025**

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.

