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Hannie Riley and Jussi Hyvärinen

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Editors

Hannie Riley and Jussi Hyvärinen

With renewed anticipation, we are delighted to present the third volume of the BETH Bulletin. This growing open-access publication continues to embody our shared vision of strengthening theological libraries across Europe and beyond through communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Since the launch of our first two editions, the Bulletin has become a meaningful space for reflection, connection, and inspiration. We are especially encouraged by the global reach and engagement the BETH Bulletin has received. The three most-read articles from previous editions have together reached over 1,500 views and downloads. This is clear evidence of the value and resonance of the work shared by our members.

At the heart of this publication is BETH's unwavering commitment to open access. By freely sharing our knowledge, experiences, and skills, we aim to foster a more inclusive and globally connected culture of library scholarship to encourage collaboration, innovation, and mutual support among theological librarians.

In this volume, we continue to celebrate the remarkable dedication of our members. You will find updates from a national association, stories of resilience in a changing climate, pioneering digital projects, and fresh perspectives on the evolving role of theological libraries. We are especially pleased to include the reflection from an early-career professional, as well as the introduction of new editors. The creative spirit is alive once more, with artistic contributions that remind us of the humanity and beauty that libraries so often nurture.

As always, we remain deeply grateful to all who contributed to this edition. Your voices and visions shape not only the Bulletin but the very character of our BETH network. We hope this edition informs, encourages, and inspires you in your work. Together, let us keep learning, building bridges, and bearing witness to the power of libraries to illuminate lives.

With warmest regards,

Hannie and Jussi

Incoming From the Newly Arriving Editors

Christine Love-Rodgers

Librarian, New College, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

Hello, I'm Christine Love-Rodgers, and I currently work as College Lead, Library Academic Support at the University of Edinburgh, leading a team of librarians supporting the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science. For over twenty years now I've worked with the School of Divinity, based at New College Library, Edinburgh – one of the largest theological libraries in the UK. I am deputy Chair of the Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries, and currently working as one of the editors on the forthcoming monograph 'Theological Libraries in the UK & Ireland.'



My first experience of BETH was at the 2023 BETH conference in Cordoba, which was a fantastic introduction to both the rich religious traditions of Cordoba and the activity and diversity of BETH. I've enjoyed reading the submitted articles for the 2025 BETH Bulletin and working with article authors to ensure the consistent and professional publication that our readers will expect. I'm also grateful to Hannie and Jussi for all their work behind the scenes in making it all happen.

Esther Jeon

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My name is Esther, and I am currently working as a library assistant in the Philosophy and Theology Faculties Library and English Faculty Library at the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford. I have always taken interest in publishing and the editorial process, so I am very thankful to Hannie and Jussi for offering me the opportunity to assist with the editing of this year's BETH Bulletin.



I started work in libraries after a period of trying out different things, as I was unsure of which career path to take after finishing my BA History degree at Oxford. I took various work experiences and internships within the Arts and Heritage sector, such as in archives at the V&A and a Diversity and Inclusion internship at the Tate Gallery. After a period working as a Data Annotator, I began working in the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford at the start of last year, and attended the 2024 BETH Conference in Sarajevo.

Working on this year's Bulletin has been a valuable reminder of the sheer scale of diversity within librarianship. It was a joy to read the submissions, which included a book review, a report concerning the creation of the ABIE's new online catalogue, a history of the Gazi Husrev-beg Library and its digitisation program, and case studies detailing the afterlife of seminary libraries after their institutions ceased to exist. I am confident that readers will appreciate the light shed on the continual efforts of librarians across Europe to progress in all aspects of their field, in particular that of sustainability.

Different Aspects of Sustainability Discussed at BETH's Annual Conference in Sarajevo

Jussi Hyvärinen

Librarian, National Library of Finland, Finland

The BETH 52nd annual conference was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 18 to 21 September 2024. The theme was “Sustainability in European Theological Libraries.” Participants came not only from all over Europe but also from North America, East Asia, and Oceania.



[Image 1] BETH Visit (photo provided by Hannie Riley)

Although I have visited the Balkans before, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a new destination for me. The country consists of two entities: the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the capital of which is Sarajevo. The city's name first brings to mind the Sarajevo assassination in 1914, which triggered the First World War. As a Finn, I vividly remember the Sarajevo Winter Olympics in 1984, where Marja-Liisa Hämäläinen won three gold medals in skiing. Later, I recall the city's name being in the news for more tragic reasons, as Sarajevo was besieged during the Yugoslav Wars from 1992 to 1995. In contrast to these dark memories, I now had the opportunity to explore a beautiful, vibrant city with a rich cultural scene, where time passes pleasantly in its alleys, museums, and cafes.

When thinking about the conference theme of sustainability, the first things that come to mind are environmental protection issues, such as recycling and reducing carbon footprints. While the preservation of the Earth's carrying capacity is the most crucial condition for the existence of humanity, the concept of sustainable development includes other goals as well. The 17 UN sustainable development goals, which were adopted by all United Nations members in 2015, are a universal call to action to end poverty and inequality, protect the planet, and ensure freedom, peace, and prosperity. For libraries, in addition to environmental protection, key goals include, among others: 4. Quality education, 5. Gender equality, 10. Reduced inequality, 16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions, and 17. Partnerships.

In the city of Sarajevo, the traveller's attention is drawn to the coexistence of different cultures and religions. The cityscape features not only mosques with minarets but also Catholic and Orthodox churches and a synagogue. The conference itself was held at the Gazi Husrev-beg's Library, founded in 1537, the collections of which include not only books, magazines, and other documents but also a very significant selection of Islamic manuscripts.



[Image 2] BETH Tour
(photo provided by Hannie Riley)

Digitisation as a challenge and opportunity for sustainability

On Wednesday, the program began with a visit to the City Hall and its magnificent architecture, which suffered severe damage during the siege of Sarajevo but was restored to its former glory between 1996 and 2022. The program also included a reception for first-time attendees, reports from member associations, and a welcome dinner.

Professor Mario Hibert opened the Thursday session of the conference at the University of Sarajevo. In his presentation, *Postprint Assemblages, New*

Extractivism and Disenchantment, he called for a more critical stance from libraries towards development managed by technocrats, in which excessive consumption of digital technologies becomes, according to the speaker, a key driver of the climate crisis and ongoing societal instability. Hibert emphasised that datafication is a new paradigm of power and therefore it is important to understand how algorithmic systems, especially Artificial Intelligence, work. The essential question arises: will power in the future reside with the technology companies based in Silicon Valley or with more democratic institutions?

Anna Cascone from the Lasallian Library, Rome, told us about Relindial (Religions: Libraries and Dialogue), which is one of IFLA Special Interest Groups. This group is dedicated to libraries serving as places of dialogue between cultures through a better knowledge of religions. It also helps libraries to meet challenges of sustainable digital preservation and reuse of their collections.

Rodrigo Nilo Palominos and Donatella Bellardini from the General Library of PP. Barnabite Centre for Historical Studies discussed ways in which the library can promote sustainability by collaborating with schools and offering education and workshops where children and young people can learn about their community's culture and history from a religious perspective. One example of these activities is the Beweb portal which gives ecclesiastical



[Image 3] BETH Tour
(photo provided by Hannie Riley)

institutions the possibility to share their historical research and enhancement activities with different audiences.

On Thursday, we heard two presentations on digitisation, which promotes sustainable development from both the perspective of preserving cultural heritage and improving its accessibility. Tomas Stolarczyk from the Polish association FIDES noted that many libraries have precious collections of old theological prints and archives that are often

difficult for researchers and students to access. The solution to this problem is the digitisation of these collections, for which public funding has been obtained in Poland.

After a guided tour within the almost five centuries-old Gazi Husrev-beg's Library, librarians Hamza Kurtanović and Ejla Ćurovac told us about the library as an institution for preserving precious collections throughout the centuries. This task was threatened by the war from 1992 to 1995. During this period, the collections were taken to safety from the bombings, and the process of microfilming then began. Later, this work continued with digitisation, and the result now is a rich digital repository.

At the end of the day, Thomas Phillips presented the possibilities of artificial intelligence for librarianship and his library's project, which aims to implement AI in indexing, creating abstracts, and interlibrary loans. Areum Cho represented Libtree, the conference sponsor. She introduced Libtree's e-CIP Contents Solution, which can be used for connecting individuals with the world's knowledge provided by libraries.

Sustainability as local and global co-operation

Friday began with a presentation by Stefano Malaspina, President of BETH. Malaspina spoke about the challenging but rewarding work that has been done in recent years to compile and organise BETH's archives.

Juergen Warmbrunn (Herder-Institut) gave a presentation on the Polish priest Jerzy Popieluszko (1947-1984): his life, work, and tragic fate under communist oppression. According to Warmbrunn, Popieluszko's life's work and example promoted many goals of sustainability, such as peace, democracy, and equality.

Jon Purcell (ABTAPL, Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries) discussed in his presentation two closed British Catholic seminaries, the libraries of which had valuable collections. Their fate was happily resolved when new caretakers and users were found for the collections. One collection went to China, and the other to a local university and cathedral.

Hannie Riley's (Wycliffe Hall, Oxford) presentation focused on the redistribution of surplus books from European theological libraries to theological libraries around the world, where there is often a shortage of literature. An organisation called Oxford Theology Resource Link has been established to facilitate book donations to libraries in the majority world, ensuring that surplus books are not wasted but instead reach those in need elsewhere in the world.



[Image 4] BETH Presentation
(photo provided by Hannie Riley)

After lunch, we participated in a guided tour to the Bosniak Institute Museum and Gallery, where we enjoyed art treasures from various centuries as well as an unforgettable, luxurious coffee service in the institute's premises.

In the first presentation of the afternoon, Raul Cervantes from Friedensau Adventist University described the process by which books in his library are handled throughout their lifecycle, from assessing the condition of returned books for repair or removal and subsequent recycling. Nina Sundnes Drønen (VID Specialised University, Stavanger) spoke about her university's campus renovation, in which the library staff also participated in the planning, keeping the principles of sustainable development at the forefront. The result was a functional unit where old furniture continued its life in harmony with the new environment.

Siong Ng from Carey Baptist College, New Zealand, talked about various forms of library information training sessions her library has provided. In 2018, the library launched a course which aimed to introduce new students to the institution, community life, academic writing, and the library. The course design was based on the integration of the student into the community, upon which learning is built. After that, our Spanish colleagues,

Fran Cortés and Jaime Lopez de Eguilaz, presented the joint catalogue of Spanish ecclesiastical libraries, which was completed after nearly 20 years of work in 2023. Currently, the ABIE Union Catalogue contains 6 million records.

Finally, John Kutsko from our American sister association (Atla) told us about Atla's role as a connector of theological libraries, a producer of research tools, and a maintainer of databases. Atla's support and collaboration with other theological libraries around the world are invaluable.

On Saturday, the conference program included a workshop for the first time. Under the guidance of Maja Drobne from PiNA (Association for Culture and Education, Slovenia), the participants prepared EU funding applications in groups and received feedback from Maja on their effectiveness and potential improvements.

I thank everyone who participated in the arrangements and our Bosnian hosts, especially Irena Pejić, for an unforgettable conference!

See you in Stavanger next year!



[Image 4] BETH Participants (photo provided by Hannie Riley)

Reflections on BETH Conference 2024: Sustainability in European Theological Libraries

Esther Jeon

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Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

I first heard about BETH and the annual BETH Conference from Hannie Riley, its Vice-President and Librarian of Wycliffe Hall. Hannie encouraged me to attend the 2024 Conference in Sarajevo, and was instrumental in making it happen. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of BETH funded by Libertree, I was able to enjoy the wonderful hospitality and beautiful historical sites of Sarajevo, as well as immerse myself in the stimulating talks and ideas of the Conference upon the theme of 'Sustainability in European Theological Libraries'. I am grateful to BETH for delivering a stellar conference, to Libertree for their sponsorship of the conference as well as my attendance, and to all the delegates who were so welcoming despite the fact that my librarianship journey has been but a brief one.



[Image 1] Gazi Husrev-Beg Library in Sarajevo (photo provided by Esther Jeon)

What comes to mind with the term 'sustainability'? For most of us, it will conjure up climate change and environmental awareness; the creation of systems to endure the foreseeable future and secure the survival and longevity of our existence. Coming to

the BETH Conference 2024 with these preconceptions in mind, I was struck by the refreshing twists on the theme supplied by this year's delegates that upended my expectations. The concept of sustainability rests upon 'three pillars': environmental, economic, and social. All three were explored during a series of surprising and truly delightful case studies and vignettes that differed immensely from talk to talk.



[Image 2] On the Roof of the Gazi Husrev-Beg Library (photo provided by Esther Jeon)

We were lucky enough to be hosted by the incredible Gazi Husrev-beg Library in Sarajevo for the duration of the conference. We were screened a film about the preservation of books during the war, which reminded us of the intangible qualities of history, art, and cultural heritage that are preserved in books, and why we too must save them and the libraries that house them. There is nothing as violent a reminder as war of the fragility of human life, and the risk of violence to the sustainability of human existence. We live in a world where the forces of technology, the changing climate, and tensions in politics continuously evolve our perceptions of the future, and where sustainability has never seemed more important.

A recurring topic during the Conference was that of AI, a looming giant that has crept up on our society from 2022 and now holds a disconcerting, ubiquitous, and persistent influence over our daily lives. It has become increasingly common to use AI to write, critique, create 'art', and to seek answers to our questions without lifting a finger to do the research ourselves. The keynote talk given by Professor Mario Hibert was a stirring call to all librarians to educate themselves about AI and meet its dogged advancement with informed readiness rather than taking a neutral stance or blindly welcoming it. In other talks that followed, delegates presented plans of action and demonstrated software that harnessed the power of AI, thus offering concrete examples of how AI is consolidating its position as an aspect of librarianship in its own right, as well as demonstrating ways in which we can

harness this power as librarians. Many, such as our sponsor Libertree, see a promising future in the utilisation of AI to assist readers with finding books and using libraries to their full potential, as well as providing invaluable digital support for librarians through their platform. These talks demonstrated the extraordinary power that AI affords us, whilst reminding us of the immense need for regulations and an understanding of its possible pitfalls and risks.



[Image 3] With Libertree directors (photo provided by Esther Jeon)

Another theme explored by a majority of the talks was sustainability through the means of digitisation and the creation of online catalogues. Many colleagues delivered talks on how they have made immense progress on the digitisation of their collections, or upcoming projects to do so, including the Gazi Husrev-beg Library in Sarajevo, in which we were lucky enough to spend a large part of the conference. Fran Cortes gave a talk about how the ABIE has created a pioneering online catalogue bringing together the collections of many Spanish ecclesiastical libraries.

Sustainability was also reimagined in terms of the afterlife of libraries in the event of the closure of their patron institutions, and how to inject new life and purpose for theological books or library furniture. A talk from Jon Purcell provided a fascinating insight into the possibilities available to seminary libraries after the closure of the seminaries themselves, using such examples as one library finding a new life abroad in a seminary in Macau, and another becoming part of Durham University. BETH Vice-President Hannie Riley delivered a talk detailing how her charity, Oxford Theology Resources Link, provides seminaries with invaluable physical books and resources by sourcing surplus theological books. Nina Sundnes Drønen of VID Stavanger talked about how old library furniture was repurposed for their new library, whilst Raul Cervantes of Friedensau Adventist University demonstrated how books can be either sold, given away, or disposed of in a dignified manner befitting them.

Various talks focused on the element of social sustainability, or improving the links between libraries and their wider communities, including students and the younger generations. Donatella Bellardini and Rodrigo Nilo Palominos of the Centre for Historical Studies PP. Barnabiti shared how they ensure a sustainable future for their institution by endeavouring to inspire a love for their collections within children and young adults.



[Image 4] Bosniak Institute (photo provided by Esther Jeon)

Using outreach programs and educational activities, they opened their archives and invited students to touch manuscripts, learn more about palaeography and Latin, and discover Dante's writings in fresh and engaging ways. By educating the community, they strive to change perceptions about libraries and History through these different approaches. In a similar vein, Siong Ng of Carey Baptist College delivered a talk about how she strengthens connections between students and the college library by using orientations and training sessions in order to facilitate dialogue and familiarity.

Thus, through fascinating talks, many of which could not be included here, the 2024 BETH Conference provided us with an array of new insights, methods, ways of thinking, and inspiration for not only new sustainability ventures for institutions but also for the future of libraries as a whole. I left the conference with a greater understanding and appreciation for the theological libraries, as well as a fresh enthusiasm for this sector and the people and organisations which make it thrive.

AI, New Extractivism and Eco-media Literacy

Dr Mario Hibert

Associate Professor, Library Science, University of Sarajevo
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegoviana

Introduction

The mechanism behind explosive digital growth is closely connected to the deep nature of computing. The boundless desire for digital technologies that shape cognitive and cultural habits frames a hegemony of values and expectations derived from the digital. In the metanarrative of datafication, netizens are merely products of the spectacle of Big Data and its automated correlations. Through their actions, users cannot grasp the infrastructural algorithmic texture of the software and code that organises and manages the platform environment. In other words, netizens cannot influence the social realm of the digital condition, since its algorithmic nature, as emphasised by F. Stalder (2018), is beyond the reach of the networked public. As critical librarianship implies questions about libraries' or librarians' professional attitudes that consciously and unconsciously support systems of oppression, we could face it with roots causing the contemporary crises, whose (digital) capitalist attitude and pro-growth discourse is looming over ecological collapse. As C. Fuchs (2024, 190) states, digital capitalism represents a dimension of capitalist society where the processes of capital accumulation, decision-making power, and reputation are mediated and organised through digital technologies, and economic, political, and cultural processes result in digital goods and digital structures. It is an antagonistic dimension of society that represents how economic class antagonism and social relations of domination are shaped by and, in turn, shape digitisation. As C. Fuchs (2024, 190) observes, paraphrasing N. Fraser, "digital capitalism is more than just a digital economy."

The public access to information and communication technologies, media and information literacy, digital inclusion, green transition, etc., are just some of the key areas in which libraries, through their services, contribute to the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. On the other hand, among librarians and information professionals, discussions on the "limits to growth" that encompass extremely complex debates on the ecologically sustainable form of capitalism, changes in investment strategies for production, and the need for a shift away from the dominant idea of human progress "based on the 18th-century strategy of unlimited resource use, continuous growth, and unbridled production" (Civallero and Plaza Moreno 2016) are extremely rare. We could say that librarians should not take the Sustainable Development Goals themselves as unquestionable indicators of progress toward a sustainable future, but rather, as D. Soudias (2021) emphasizes, be ready to minimize the reproduction of neoliberal reasoning and transgress institutional limitations related to discourses, policies, resources, and technologies. In this regard, this paper intends to offer a framework for critical reflection in terms of eco-media literacy since technological innovations coupled with various forms of market-based solutions are not leading to greener production, greener jobs, greener consumption and greener growth, nor are they reducing inequalities and environmental impacts, but rather, they are ossifying the status-quo of dominant hegemonic practices of digital colonialism.

Beyond Sustainability

Sustainability, understood as ecological viability, assumes that economic and social activities account for balancing the capacities of natural systems and the interconnected deep crises of contemporary societies. If we consider that the end of democracy is contemplated in a range of social theories (Runciman 2018; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018), as well as alarming forecasts about the disruption of planetary boundaries for sustainability (for example, Rockström et al. 2009; Steffen et al. 2015), the repoliticisation of the concept of sustainability emerges as a foundational methodological movement. The very concept of "sustainability" arises from the need to articulate the relationship between economic growth and development and ecological degradation. As such, it has been presented as a global priority for decades in order to achieve environmental sustainability and socio-economic justice.

Almost a decade ago, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015) with seventeen goals aimed at fighting inequality and injustice, ending extreme poverty, and addressing the dangers of climate change. However, the defining logic of capitalism, exponential growth in the "accumulate or die" dynamic, has not been abandoned. In other words, the hegemony of growth remains unquestioned.

Quite the contrary, as Buch-Hansen, Koch, and Nesterova (2024, 2) explain, the threat of ecological collapse has paved the way for so-called "green growth," or the continuation of economic growth combined with the protection of "environmental services," accompanied by optimism for technological innovation toward greener production, jobs, and consumption. The green, eco-friendly marketing model is based on the concept of sustainable development ("green consumerism", Smith 1998; "greenwashing," "green spin", Alves 2009; Roszkowska-Menkes 2021; "Green New Deal", Herman 2015; "green jobs," "green economy", Cottle 2015), without addressing the primary causes of the crisis. As Civallo and Plaza Moreno (2016, 17) note: "The green wave has not succeeded in reducing the human impact on the planet, but has instead worsened the situation by creating new business opportunities". In regard to the prevailing inability to imagine a different type of society, eco-social collapse stems from the unsustainable lifestyle of the privileged minority of humanity: "over half the world's people are living in squalor, and about 20% of the world's population enjoys a Westernized middle-class lifestyle or better. The problem, then, is obvious: when material wealth is fixed, there needs to be an equitable distribution of resources to ensure a decent life for everyone" [1] (Kwet 2024, 44).

[1] "Let's put it this way: imagine the world's wealth is a ten-slice pizza pie produced in a town of 100 people. A few rich people own the dough, oven, restaurant, guns, and houses, and they force the majority to cook the pie. One person (representing the upper class) takes five of the slices and the next nine people (representing the middle class) take another four. The last slice is divided among the remaining 90 people (representing the global poor). This is how wealth is divided across the world. Socialists have long argued that this arrangement is totally unjust, and have been trying for over a century to make a fair and equitable alternative. Defenders of capitalism argue that it is ethical. Instead of sharing the pizza equally, we can keep growing the total size of the pie, and one day everyone will have enough." (Kwet 2024, 44-45).

The role and position of libraries in the development of democracy, civil society, culture, and education, as well as their potential to support the social foundations of human well-being, is a recognisable mission embedded in professional values. IFLA, for example, clearly supports the integration of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, from promoting literacy, access to information, and digital inclusion, to activities, projects, and programs that support decision-makers in recognising libraries as partners in advocating ecological responsibility, inspiring change in local communities.

In recent decades, libraries have shown exceptional dedication to contributing to sustainable development practices, particularly through the creation of so-called green libraries. According to the IFLA Environment, Sustainability, and Libraries Section (ENSULIB), a green and sustainable library is one that respects ecological, economic, and social aspects of sustainability. Green and sustainable libraries can be of any size but should have: environmentally friendly buildings and equipment; active reduction of emissions and the carbon footprint of buildings and equipment; the principle of a green office: business routines and processes that are ecologically sustainable; sustainable economy: careful attention to consumption, promoting and developing a circular economy and sharing economy, making them accessible to the entire community; sustainable library services: relevant and up-to-date information easily accessible to users, offering shared spaces, devices, and education on ecological topics, economical work processes, and a positive carbon footprint; social sustainability: implies good education, literacy, social engagement, cultural diversity, inclusion, and general involvement – libraries actively work to reduce inequality; environmental management: environmental goals that align with the SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timebound); the library works to reduce its own negative impact on the environment, and its environmental protection policy, implementation, and results are presented to the broader public; commitment to general ecological goals and programs: commitment guided by the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and related ecological certifications and programs (IFLA 2022a; IFLA 2022b).

Still, libraries are almost totally immersed in the adoption of the consumerist hegemonic socio-economic model, rarely revising its consumption patterns, particularly what markets and ideas they are supporting with their purchases, services, and activities.

As E. Civallero and S. Plaza Moreno warn, libraries could adopt an "eco-socialist ethic" (Löwy 2002, 2004, cited in Civallero and Plaza Moreno 2016), or positions that exclude overly optimistic visions regarding the severity of the ecological crisis. In articulating anti-capitalist resistance to appropriation, competition, accumulation, consumerism, mercantilism, extractivism, and advocating for commons, public, and collective societal interests, and ultimately degrowth, Civallero and Plaza Moreno (2016) bring to the forefront some of the fundamental principles of critical librarianship. Nevertheless, emancipatory ideals of equality, democracy, and community fundamentally permeate library theory and practice, while on the other hand, critical approaches to librarianship and information science, which question positions of power and the social practices that perpetuate them, often remain on the margins of the profession.

If libraries, as sites of cultural production, as J. Budd (2003, 22) argues, help in the construction of desires and expectations of communities, and actively respond to their expressed needs, then social responsibility could also be articulated in the open recognition of public failure in the context of the commodification of information and knowledge. As Lawson, Sanders, and Smith (2015, 15) state, the commodification of the information profession is conditioned by the authority of neoliberal hegemony.

The value of information and knowledge as a public good for intellectual and social progress is now secondary to its primary purpose of economic efficiency". Furthermore, the fetishisation of productivity, with the constant threat of austerity measures as a form of punishment for the inefficiency (of libraries) in capitalist societies, also serves as a tool to deter the workforce from understanding the social complexity of the products of their labour (Nicholson and Seale 2018).

Therefore, it can be argued that the rhetoric of neutrality, when it comes to green libraries, gives way to a critical perspective regarding the proclaimed values of sustainability. However, it is almost impossible to find examples within the profession that unequivocally problematize the "green" agenda as a paradigm for new capitalist growth. If core librarianship principles embody "real utopia," given that they are based on fundamentally anti-capitalist beliefs (free and universal

access and distribution), alternative proposals for social change as well as in long-term political strategies for social justice and human emancipation (Wright 2011) should be aligned with bold visions of attitude shifts.

One such proposal can be found in the recent research by M. Antonelli, R. Tanner, R. S. Aldrich, and A. K. Ho (2022) titled "Libraries in the Doughnut Economy," where, in addition to note regarding the urgency of a shift in the global economy due to climate challenges, they emphasise the principles of the doughnut economy as guidelines for libraries to also question the culture of growth dependence.

The authors highlight the compatibility of the seven principles derived from the doughnut economy model, as presented by K. Raworth (2017), with fundamental library values, proposing seven ways in which libraries can contribute to society in the transition to a 21st-century economy (Antonelli et al. 2022, 130).

According to Antonelli et al. (2022, 137)

This will require library leaders to talk differently about what a library is and how we do business. It will require us to participate in workplaces that are centred on well-being. It will require youth service librarians to embed eco-literacy, empathy, and civic-mindedness into services and programs at a deeper level. It will require collection development managers to connect with readers and researchers in new ways and to define collections more broadly, beyond traditional library materials. It will require adult programming librarians to have an ethos that puts social cohesion, engagement, and empowerment at the centre of their thinking. It will require the operation and construction of library facilities that do not just use up natural resources but put back positive assets into the ecosystem”

Undoubtedly, such a mindset shift could activate support networks and services to facilitate the production of knowledge in local communities and strengthen them, encouraging user communities to raise awareness about social inequalities and environmental destruction, the importance of wealth redistribution in all its forms, along with advocating critical openness, digital commons, open educational resources, etc. Without epistemological and ontological alternatives to the digital capitalism narrative, the increasing calls from professional conferences attributing

"green libraries" to project slogans about sustainable development goals will not bring about change in ways of thinking. Consequently, we rarely hear in library discourse voices of genuine emancipatory alternatives nor direct articulations about being trapped and dependent on the "consumerist, extractivist, and exploitative mentality that currently governs our economy" (Antonelli et al. 2022, 137).

In this light, we should articulate missing questions about structures, functions, habits, norms and practices of "digital" along with questions on how digital technologies shape production of subjectivity and destruction of the sociality by confronting actors responsible for global inequality and planetary destruction, as well as rejecting the political consensus that technological innovations requiring growth are the best way to combat climate change. Whether librarians are ready to articulate their position in political demands beyond capitalism or conform with informational/computational structures as puppets to the "hegemony of growth" (Schmelzer 2016) may depend on how libraries respond to understanding of the techno-social condition.

AI hype-revisited

Addressing the capitalist, imperialist, and environmental dimensions of digital power (which together deepen global inequalities and push the planet's ecosystem toward an impending collapse), therefore, requires critical analysis of the global impacts of the high-tech economy (more precisely, critical theory of digital capitalism, digital regrowth, etc.).

In words of M. Kwet (2024, 9), we are missing a dimension of digital degrowth theory (and practice): "When it comes to technology, most degrowth research and activism focus on green technologies like solar panels, wind turbines, but not on the relationship between companies like Google, Microsoft, and Facebook with degrowth". Articulating the digital degrowth through the lens of depoliticising technology leads to new insights into the nature of the climate crisis by addressing the challenges of digitisation, algorithmisation, and platformisation across all segments of our lives, fostering an understanding of digital capitalism in broader social transformations. The growing geopolitical autonomy of machine intelligence, the algorithmic factory, establishes bio-informational capitalism by digital transformation of human interactions (Hibert 2022).

The ideology of Silicon Valley, based on technological disruptiveness and innovation, generates an algorithmically generated model of the world based on automated calculations of data-mediated techno-sociability. The algorithmic operationalisation of the hegemony of networked colonisation, so-called “platform capitalism” (Srnicsek 2016), as a regime of “datafication” (van Dijck 2014) and “data colonialism” (Couldry & Mejias 2019), being delivered through smart technologies, ultimately culminates in the ubiquitous AI hype. The new economic imaginary of datafication-driven growth, as explained by G. Lovink (2022), is driven by old premises of hyper-growth and involves the process of entrusting and transferring management power over meta-data to corporate platforms, characterized by the vast interconnection of governments, businesses, media, and the academic community in an ideological consensus about the power of the global algorithmic economy.

Paradoxically, nothing better represents the current obsession with growth than the “obsession” with Big Data: “Big Data is a More Data ideology, driven by old school hypergrowth premises.” (Lovink 2022). Datafication, according to Schafer and van Es (2017), is at the “core of our culture and social organisation”. Moreover, its ideological foundations, as van Dijck (2014) observes, are based on problematic ontological and epistemological claims, yet “dataism exhibits characteristics of a widely spread secular belief” (ibidem), creating the illusion of absolute knowledge (Han 2022). AI hype based on data-centric rationality is currently upholding a new era of data cult belief that everything is calculable and controllable, although machinic intelligence never reaches the conceptual level of knowledge.

While it is commonly understood that correlation does not imply causation, machine learning systems impose, as Pasquinelli and Joler (2021, 1276) noticed, a statistical culture replacing the traditional episteme of causation (and political accountability) with one of correlations blindly driven by the automation of decision making. This techno-libertarian attitude shows not only contempt for the constraints of democracy but also wilful blindness to the environmental costs of ever-increasing energy consumption in a datafied society. As noted by Y. Yu, J. Wang, Y. Liu et al. (2024) the rapid development of AI is contributing to exponential surge of computing power demand and projected total carbon footprint from the AI systems in the top 20 of carbon emissions could reach up to 102.6 Mt of CO₂ equivalent per

year, similar to the emissions from 22 million people for a year. In the International Energy Agency (IEA 2024, 8), report is projected that the electricity consumption associated with AI, data centres, and cryptocurrency could double by 2026. These figures are just a minor reminder of alarming environmental costs related to datafication growth as an unquestioned development paradigm precluding “collective imagination that in many ways demonstrated how alternative vertical and horizontal technological arrangements were possible. Not one stack but many plateaux” (Lovink 2022, 32).

However, as Pasquinelli (2023) shows, the decolonisation of the AI narrative should begin with understanding the social history of algorithms, specifically recognising that concrete material practices of organising and managing knowledge, expressed in collective human behaviour, extend back to ancient ritual formulas that also implied precise, step-by-step instructions. The fact that humanity, as Pasquinelli emphasises, remembers ancient formulas about procedures and techniques for managing rituals (which is how the oldest material practices, those predating many human tools and all modern machines, have been preserved and recorded) reveals that the fascination with artificial intelligence is a symptom of trust in algorithms as abstract mathematical principles.

Moreover, according to Pasquinelli (2023), the essence of artificial intelligence is not to replicate human cognition but to codify human knowledge, skills, and division of labour. Ultimately, understanding so-called AI systems does not stem from the question of whether the machine is self-aware but from the insight that the algorithmic factory emerged as an expression of the need to speed up communication, automate mental work, and manage the economy. Exposing the materiality of technology, therefore, aims to decolonise the economic imperative of datafication-driven growth by articulating the material consequences of digital platformisation.

The dominance of the techno-industrial dictate of automation and development leads to a complete loss of awareness of its materiality (Han 2022, 95–96). Eco-media literacy (Lopez 2021) is an emerging area of media literacy that teaches that the integrated relationship between media and living systems reveals the same old McLuhan’s essential truth of media literacy: media is not a tool anymore, but the

environment. As stated by Haider and Sundin (2022), media and information literacy poorly refers to the ongoing individualisation, fragmentation, and emotionalisation of information and the proliferation of strategically circulated misinformation and malinformation, accelerating polarisation and alienation, as well as the processes of self-commodification causing the loss of individuality, freedom and happiness.

An urgent need to demystify the invisibility of computational operations by bringing them out from behind the veil of technical obfuscation (Haider and Sundin 2022), summed up in the following question: Is media and information literacy even possible in an age of largely invisible algorithms and increasingly invisible information systems? Since the anatomy of artificial intelligence reveals the materiality behind the opacity of the social algorithm, which is rooted in new forms of labour and exploitation (Crawford and Joler 2018; Joler 2020; Crawford 2021), we should first admit that AI is an extraction industry (Crawford 2021).

The three key driving components of AI, data, human labour, and environmental resources, according to K. Crawford (2021), reveal an enormous environmental footprint pointing to how the deep materiality of resources (rare minerals, energy, water, etc.) that power artificial intelligence inevitably leads to the unprecedented centralisation of power. The world re-designed by Silicon Valley was supposed to be decentralised and free; instead, we have ended up with a monolithic techno-colonial power.

Artificial intelligence is not an objective, universal, or neutral computational technique that makes determinations without human direction. Its systems are embedded in social, political, cultural, and economic worlds, shaped by humans, institutions, and imperatives that determine what they do and how they do it. They are designed to discriminate, to amplify hierarchies, and to encode narrow classifications. When applied in social contexts such as policing, the court system, health care, and education, they can reproduce, optimize, and amplify existing structural inequalities. This is no accident: AI systems are built to see and intervene in the world in ways that primarily benefit the states, institutions, and corporations that they serve. In this sense, AI systems are expressions of power that emerge from wider economic and political forces, created to increase profits and centralize control for those who wield them. But this is not how the story of artificial intelligence is typically told” (Crawford 2021, 211).

Conclusion

Asking the question about what happens when artificial intelligence saturates political life and depletes planetary resources and how "new extractivism" (Joler 2020) reshapes our societies is not only an alarm to emphasise the struggle against injustice and poverty, but also demands radical change in social behaviour.

Undoubtedly, the world we live in requires a radical transformation due to the urgency of intensified climate change, loss of biodiversity, epidemics, migration, and wars. Libraries may play an important role not only in bridging the digital, AI divide, but also in exposing the challenges of standing at the edge of ecological collapse caused by the abuse of power.

Therefore, by developing strategic approaches and partnerships with movements that, in a broader political-ecological sense, encompass research that connect societal transformation with the theories and practices of so-called eco-materialism (Lopez 2021), eco-media literacy aims to promote a normative shift in eco-ethical cultural policies, media practices, and attitudes, encouraging changes in the cultural behavior of ecologically conscious citizenship. More precisely, the goal of eco-media literacy is to promote normative change through eco-ethical cultural policies, practices, and approaches to transforming existing media practices, industry structures, and regulations (ibidem).

By introducing often overlooked aspects of the effects of digital information infrastructure, as well as the critical evaluation of digital capitalism, a deeper integration of the assumptions for the reconceptualization of media and information literacy and the new actualisation critical librarianship should emphasise structural aspects of information disorder, particularly the exploitation of data, human labour, and natural resources.

The "ecological reboot" suggesting a material and affective turn towards ethical, political, and aesthetic considerations under the name "eco-media studies", can be another important locus that bridges the epistemic gap between technology and nature, human and non-human, material and immaterial, and so on. In other words, eco-media studies today are much more of a "sphere" than a "field" that frames various areas of research without imposed boundaries (Lopez et al. 2021).

The goal of eco-media literacy is therefore the promotion of normative change through eco-ethical cultural policies, practices, and approaches to transform existing media practices, industry structures, and regulations.

Finally, we should not forget that “AI is neither artificial nor intelligent. Rather, artificial intelligence is both embodied and material, made from natural resources, fuel, human labour, infrastructures, logistics, histories, and classifications. AI systems are not autonomous, rational, or able to discern anything without extensive, computationally intensive training with large datasets or predefined rules and rewards. In fact, artificial intelligence as we know it depends entirely on a much wider set of political and social structures. Due to the capital required to build AI at scale and the ways of seeing that it optimises, AI systems are ultimately designed to serve existing dominant interests. In this sense, artificial intelligence is a registry of power” (Crawford 2021, 8).

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Discard to Discovery: Empowering Majority World Theological Libraries

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Introduction

In an era when information is paramount, ensuring equitable access to information and knowledge remains a significant challenge as information divides persist and even widen across many parts of the world. Through various channels, my roles as the college librarian at Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford, Chair of ABTAPL (Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries) and Vice-president of BETH (Bibliothèques Européennes de Théologie - European Theological Library Association), have provided numerous opportunities to understand diverse situations of theological libraries globally and the unique environments in which they operate. From many conversations with theological librarians over the past few years, I have learned that we all face difficulties and struggles in our rapidly ever-changing world, influenced by technology innovation, political instability and the demographic shifts in Christianity from the Global North to the Global South (i.e., Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania). According to Zurlo, Johnson and Crossing, “world Christianity changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century with the continued shift of adherents from the Global North to the Global South” (Zurlo, Johnson and Crossing 2020, 13).

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In the West, this shift is compounded by the declining popularity of theology as a discipline and research subject, alongside waning public interest in Christianity. These trends place additional pressure on the existence of theological libraries, leading to surplus theological collections due to library closures, mergers, space limitations, downsizing, updating, or weeding.

Conversely, “the decline of Christianity in the Global North is now being outpaced by the rise of Christianity in the Global South” (Zurlo, Johnson and Crossing 2020, 9). Consequently, many majority world theological libraries face a very different challenge: a lack of resources to cope with a rapid expansion of theological education and ministerial training.

Recognising the global imbalance in access to resources and information, I felt compelled to act. To address this issue from my perspective, I decided to start with 'Why?' – a framework introduced by Simon Sinek in his book, *Start with Why*. In this book, Sinek introduces the Golden Circle, which consists of three layers: 'Why, How and What'. The inner circle is 'Why', the middle centre is 'How,' and finally the outer circle is 'What' (Sinek 2009, 37). According to him, this circle “provides compelling evidence of how much more we can achieve, if we remind ourselves to start everything we do by first asking why” (2009, 38).

Thus, I began by asking myself why I wanted to undertake this initiative, followed by how I would implement it, and finally, what actions I would take. This article will explore each country’s trends and situations to elucidate my 'Why' and outline the steps taken to address the disparities in theological resource distribution.

The United Kingdom

Starting on home ground, theological libraries in the UK have been closing or merging. I am often the first one to hear this news as I am Chair of the British Association, ABTAPL. Many theological libraries are struggling with financial constraints and merging with humanities institutions due to the unpopularity of theology as a discipline and a decline in the number of students (Press Office 2019).

This trend is not only limited to institutions, but also to wider society. Church attendance has declined from 11.8% to 5% of the population between 1980 to 2015 (Faith Survey n.d.). Many physical collections of theology resources are discarded or stored away off-site, with more preference for e-resources. For example, institutions such as the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS n.d.), University College London (UCL n.d.) and the Bodleian (Bodleian Libraries 2019) have adopted an “electronic first” policy. However, centuries of theological scholarship, research heritage, and academic excellence in theology and Biblical studies cannot be overlooked.

Ukraine

In the autumn of 2023, I met the librarian from the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary at the BETH conference in Córdoba and heard his desperate appeal. He shared the following story with me. Despite the war, the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary had the highest number of graduations (190 in 2023) in its 20-year history. Teaching and learning are still going strong. However, due to devastation and destruction, many collections were destroyed and ruined. No funds are available to invest in collection acquisition. English language books in theology and Biblical studies are greatly welcomed (pers. comm., September 2023).

South Sudan: Bethel Theological Seminary

Bethel Theological Seminary, founded in 2018 by the Rev. Dr. Enoch Song, is currently a small but resilient institution with around 50 students. Rev. Song serves as the pastor of a small Korean church in Brighton, UK, ministering to the local Korean community, which comprises mostly students and has a congregation of about ten members. Despite his responsibilities in the UK, Rev. Song has a deep commitment to Africa and has been actively engaged in African ministry.

When Rev. Song learned the news about South Sudan’s independence during a visit to Kenya, where he was collaborating with local missionaries on campus evangelism outreach, he was moved by South Sudan’s crucial geopolitical significance in relation to Islamic Sudan. This prompted him to relocate his ministry from Kenya to South Sudan (pers. comm., April 2024).

South Sudan already has many faithful local church pastors. However, they often receive relatively short-term theological education and training before being immediately deployed to serve their congregations. Recognising the need for more specialised and systematic education and training, Rev. Song, along with many Korean pastors serving Korean churches in the UK—many of whom have obtained doctoral degrees in theology from Western institutions—collaborated to provide high-quality lectures at Bethel Theological Seminary. They visit three times a year for roughly two weeks each time. Rev. Song visited Wycliffe Hall and collected 322 books on practical ministry in April and 259 in July 2024, which he plans to take to South Sudan in August (pers. comm. July 2024).

Uganda: Kumi University

I learned about Kumi University through a connection at KTLA (the South Korean Theology University and Seminary Library Association). Kumi University is located in the east of Uganda and was founded by a Korean missionary couple in 1996 in one of the poorest districts of the country. The university now has 500 undergraduate students across four departments including Theology. The library is ill-equipped with books, making it imperative to acquire good quality resources. English language books in theology and biblical studies, as well as Bible commentaries, are extremely expensive and so desperately needed (pers. comm., April 2024).

Myanmar: Emmanuel Theological College

Emmanuel Theological College is an Anglican seminary in Kalaymyo, which reopened in 2022 under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. David Brang Than, who earned his PhD at Sungkonghoe University, an Anglican University in Seoul, South Korea. After completing his education, he returned to Myanmar to minister to his people in a region where local conflicts persist. Currently he has 13 students, with 15 expected in the new academic year. Rev. Than aims to equip the library with 8,000 books. Although classes are taught in their local language, academic texts are often not yet written or translated in the local languages, making English-language theology books essential.

South Korea: KTLA

KTLA (Korean Theological University and Seminary Library Association) celebrated their fiftieth anniversary in 2023. I had the privilege of attending this celebratory event last summer, where I was particularly moved by one presentation. KTLA has been sending their library members to theological libraries in the majority world for one to two weeks each summer to set up libraries or update their systems and collections, all personally funded. During these trips, the Korean librarians work tirelessly from early in the morning to late evening, taking only a couple of days off before flying back (pers. comm., June 2023). In South Korea, where summer holidays are typically very short—often just one to two weeks per year—KTLA views this initiative as their mission and calling. They have been running this program since 2015, with pausing only during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their dedication and sacrifice greatly humbled me.

The reason for their dedication might be rooted in the unique history of Christianity in Korea and the significant impact theological books have had. The history of Christianity in Korea is unusual, as books, particularly theology books and the Bible, played an important role even before the arrival of missionaries by preparing the way. Rausch and Park discussed the crucial role that theological books and the Bible played in Korea before missionaries arrived. Rausch and Park state, “Koreans were first introduced to Catholicism in the early seventeenth century through books on ‘Western learning’” acquired by a Korean diplomat during his visit to China. “When a Chinese missionary named James Zhou Wenmo... arrived in Korea in late 1794, there were already several thousand Catholics there” (Rausch and Park 2020, 12). Therefore, remarkably, the first church in Korea was founded not by foreign missionaries but by Koreans who independently studied theology books and the Bible (Kim and Ko 2018). This fact is echoed by Allen Clark (1986, 39–40).

A similar scenario unfolded with the inception of Korean Protestantism. Robert Thomas, a Welsh missionary, handed over some copies of a Chinese New Testament to Korean passersby just before his execution in 1866 on the shore of Pyeongyang, without an opportunity to engage in preaching or evangelism. This act planted the initial seed of the exploration of Protestantism in Korea. The distribution of this Bible led to the conversion of some individuals (Clark 1986, 62–63). Furthermore, as Rausch

and Park note:

While there were attempts by Protestant missionaries to enter Korea in 1832 and 1866, sustained contact and conversion would not occur until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Koreans abroad in Manchuria came into contact with Protestantism through Scottish missionaries, such as John Ross, and smuggled Ross' Korean translations of the Gospels and then the entire New Testament into Korea before the first resident missionary, Methodist Horace Allen, arrived in 1884 (Rausch and Park 2020, 13).

These theology books and the Bible were truly prepared well in advance of missionaries arriving on the Korean peninsula. Currently, South Korea stands firmly rooted in Christianity, exemplifying its robust foundation by emerging as the second-largest sender of missionaries globally (Moll 2006). South Korea is approximately 99 times smaller than the US in area, and the population of the US is six times larger than South Korea. Considering this population size, South Korea sends out the most missionaries per capita. This stands as a testament to the profound impact of the Gospel and the Word.

These stories are my 'Why'. With my 'Why' established, I now present my 'How'.

How to Bridge the Gap

In the spring of 2023, a casual conversation over lunch with a visiting academic who heads a seminary in a majority world country sparked an important initiative. For safety and security reasons, I cannot name the country or the institution. As a librarian, I inquired about their seminary library. They highlighted the inadequacy of the library in terms of academic resources, expressing challenges in procuring theological books for academic purposes in their country. Recognising that librarians in the West are often overwhelmed by surplus books, I felt compelled to take action to address the disparity between those with access and those without.

Understanding the transformative influence of the Word, I felt a strong urge to connect surplus books in the UK with libraries in theological centres, seminaries, colleges, and universities, expanding rapidly in the majority world and all in dire

need of theological books. Through library and church networks, I began exploring ways to support libraries in need with the following questions: How do I reduce the inequality and disparity in theological resource distribution? How do I bridge the gap between those who have and those who do not? How can I meet the needs of those who are seeking advanced learning? How can I share my surplus theological resources with the majority world?

From the cases mentioned earlier, it is clear that theological libraries in the West hold a wealth of knowledge waiting to be shared. By donating surplus books, we can empower theological education in the majority world, unlocking new perspectives and strengthening global Christian communities. Theological libraries in these regions often lack critical resources, hindering the ability of students and researchers to access foundational texts. Identifying and addressing these gaps can open new avenues for learning and growth. This is where my charity, Oxford Theology Resources Link, comes into play.

What to Do: Oxford Theology Resources Link

In addressing the core issues I have identified, the ultimate answer lies in the mission and activities of my charity, Oxford Theology Resources Link. This initiative aims to bridge the gap between surplus academic theological books in the UK and theological libraries in need within the majority world. Our goal is to ensure that every community has access to the transformative power of theological knowledge. The Oxford Theology Resources Link operates on three core principles.

1. **Providing Good Quality Academic Resources:** Ensuring that the books sent are relevant and beneficial for academic and theological education.
2. **Giving the Right to Choose:** Allowing the recipient libraries to select the books they need most in line with their curriculum and community.
3. **Ongoing Support for Sustainability:** Offering continuous support to ensure the long-term sustainability of the receiving libraries.

Through these efforts, we aim to bridge the gap and foster an environment where theological education can thrive globally, benefiting from the wealth of resources available in the West.

Empowering Access

- **Intellectual Nourishment:** Robust theological collections inspire critical thinking, theological reflection, and the exchange of ideas.
- **Educational Advancement:** Access to theological resources can elevate educational opportunities, equipping the next generation of pastors, scholars, and community leaders.
- **Contextual Relevance:** Providing culturally appropriate materials ensures the content resonates with local contexts, fostering deeper engagement and application.

Sourcing Surplus

- **Identifying Opportunity:** We reach out to academics, seminaries, and libraries to uncover theological resources no longer needed.
- **Sorting and Listing items:** Donated books are carefully sorted and listed to ensure they meet the needs of recipient libraries.
- **Coordinating Logistics:** We arrange safe, legitimate, and efficient transportation of donated books to their final destinations.

Delivery and Distribution

- **Packaging:** Books are carefully packed with all relevant paperwork for smooth processing.
- **Shipping:** We collaborate with logistics partners to ensure timely and cost-effective delivery.
- **Distribution:** We work with local partners to efficiently process customs clearance, then distribute books to theological libraries in need.

Collaborative Efforts

- **Partnership:** We foster collaborative relationships with organisations, charities and individuals to amplify our impact.

- **Networking:** We connect with a global community of stakeholders to share knowledge and best practice.
- **Teamwork:** We leverage the diverse skills and resources of volunteers to streamline the donation and distribution process.

Contextual Relevance

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** We are not dumping the books we no longer need. Where possible, we first send a list of available books, then let the recipient library choose what they want to receive.
- **Topical Alignment:** When direct selection is not possible, we consult with professional theological librarians in the UK to curate books to meet the needs of the recipient communities, maximising accessibility and understanding.
- **Ongoing Support:** We maintain open communication with recipients to continuously improve the relevance and impact of the donated resources. Additionally, we offer ongoing training for library staff and volunteers to empower the local workforce.

Progress

From inception until May 2025, OTRL has continued its mission to support theological libraries in the Majority World through the collection, curation, and distribution of academic theological resources. Our efforts in 2024 and this year have focused on three strategic areas: international book shipments, institutional partnerships, and training and consultation engagement.

Book Shipments

- **Uganda:** Building on our established shipping route with Books2Africa, a resource distribution UK charity, we successfully delivered two full pallets—approximately 2,600 books—to Kumi University in Uganda in early 2025. Kumi has now expressed interest in expanding their library to include Business Studies materials. We are actively sourcing relevant titles.

- South Sudan: A planned shipment to a theological institution in South Sudan had to be rerouted due to delays in building infrastructure and the worsening political situation in this region. The books were instead sent to Bethel Seminary in Uganda, a sister institution, where they will directly benefit theological education and ministerial training until the situation in South Sudan is more stable.
- Ukraine: OTRL has been regularly sending books to a theological institution in Ukraine. So far, 13 successful shipments, totalling approximately 2,000 books, have been delivered safely via a secure, door-to-door route. This complex but well-organised logistical operation is a model of successful international distribution. We are now in conversation with another Ukrainian seminary to expand our support in response to growing on-the-ground needs.
- Antioch Project: In collaboration with Book Aid Charitable Trust, OTRL supported the shipment of 10,000 books to the Antioch project site. The books have safely arrived and are currently undergoing customs clearance. We are hopeful that they will be released and delivered to the recipient library in the coming weeks.
- Pending Projects:
 - A library partnership in Myanmar has been temporarily paused due to ongoing logistical complications and political changes. We hope to resume this project when the situation improves.
 - A request from a West African theological seminary remains on hold due to a shortage of available volunteers to lead and coordinate the initiative.
 - An additional project, Azra, is currently delayed due to challenges in establishing shipping routes and navigating customs clearance. We continue to work closely with our international partners to find viable solutions.

International Collaboration and Global Outreach

- OTRL continues to build strong links with theological library associations such as ABTAPL, BETH, Atla, KTLA, other resource distribution NGOs, missionary organisations, and churches.
- We are currently coordinating a joint conference and training programme for June 2025 at Wycliffe Hall with KTLA delegates and representatives from 4 The World Resource Distributors (USA). Also, representatives from Atla and Theological Book Network from Scholar Leaders will join the discussion. This event will strengthen

our reciprocal learning and catalyse sustainable partnerships for cataloguing, book distribution, and theological librarian training in Africa and Asia.

Training and Consultation Engagement

A recent pilot initiative in Sierra Leone has been completed successfully. OTRL provided training materials and tailored instructions to equip a mission team of four students from Wycliffe Hall, who travelled to Sierra Leone to set up a theological library on-site. The team successfully catalogued over 1,000 books, laying a solid foundation for long-term theological education in the region. This model of student-led mission, backed by OTRL's remote guidance and planning, offers a promising blueprint for future scalable projects.

Conclusion

In an era of profound global disparity, the need to bridge the gap between surplus theological resources in the West and the pressing needs of libraries in the majority world has never been more critical. The Oxford Theology Resources Link seeks to address this imbalance by facilitating the transfer of valuable theological texts to regions where they are in urgent demand.

Our mission is driven by a recognition of the transformative power of theological education. By ensuring that high-quality academic resources reach those who need them, we aim to empower theological institutions in the majority world, fostering intellectual nourishment, educational advancement, and contextual relevance. Through a structured approach—ranging from sourcing surplus materials and managing logistics to fostering collaborative efforts and ensuring contextual sensitivity—our initiative is designed to maximise the impact of every book donated. The process of bridging this resource gap involves not just the physical act of transferring books but also a commitment to understanding and addressing the specific needs of recipient libraries. By working closely with local partners and maintaining open lines of communication, we ensure that the donated resources are both relevant and effectively utilised.

The challenges are significant, but the potential for positive impact is immense. The Oxford Theology Resources Link stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and the profound difference that dedicated effort can make in enhancing global theological education. As we continue to build and refine our approach, we remain committed to the goal of creating a more equitable distribution of theological knowledge, thereby strengthening Christian communities and advancing scholarly engagement across the globe.

In conclusion, the work of Oxford Theology Resources Link not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters long-term growth and sustainability in theological education worldwide. By connecting surplus resources with those in need, we contribute to a more informed, educated, and spiritually-enriched global community.

If you are interested in this cause and want to learn more about Oxford Theology Resources Link, please visit our website at <https://oxfordtheologyresourceslink.web.ox.ac.uk>.

Links to Other Institutions Mentioned

- American Theological Library Association (Atla): <https://www.atla.com/>
- Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries (ABTAPL): <https://abtapl.org.uk>
- Books2Africa: <https://books2africa.org/>
- European Theological Library Association (BETH): <https://beth.eu>
- Kumi University: <https://kumiuniversity.ac.ug>
- South Korean Theology University and Seminary Library Association (KTLA): <https://ktla.or.kr>
- Sungkonghoe University (Anglican University in Seoul, South Korea): <https://skhu.ac.kr>
- Theological Book Network (TBN), Scholar Leaders: <https://www.scholarleaders.org/tbn/>
- Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary: <https://uets.edu.ua/en/main/>
- 4 the World Resource Distributors: <https://4wrld.org/>

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The Changes in the Information Culture of Theological Research: The Faculty of Theology in the University of Helsinki as an Example

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Introduction

The term information culture originates from Finnish library research, and was launched by Mariam Ginman, an information specialist at Åbo Akademi. Her article “Information culture and business performance”, published in 1987, dealt with the ability of the business world to respond to changes in the operational environment by collecting and structuring relevant information related to the external world in order to drive the company’s success. This requires active monitoring of environmental changes and its flexible adaptation to the operations of the company (Ginman 1987).

Since Ginman’s article, the study of information culture has expanded to also cover cultural values, attitudes and effects related to information. All organisations and communities have their own information culture, regardless of how these cultures are perceived, evaluated or processed. Usually, in information research, the concept of information culture is associated with the conscious actions of an organization or community, especially with processing information and data. However, information culture cannot be controlled because it is based not only on measurable quantities but also on values and beliefs (Oliver 2017).

The 'Hardcore' of the Scientific Research and the Big Framework of Information Culture

In this article about changes in the information culture in theological research, I approach the topic openly and inclusively. I try to outline the question in a way that shifts the attention from the scientific community to partly outside of it, more precisely, between the scientific community and the surrounding reality. Amidst the drastic changes that have taken place in recent decades, the role of the library has also changed radically. It can no longer position itself as a mediator of information, in other words, as a manager of a collection of printed books, but must constantly search for its new role in the cross-pressures of the digital revolution, the greed of commercial publishers, mundanity of social media, and open publishing.

Scientific research – and in this case, the theological one - is not related only to the organisation or community practising it. This is not the case in the sense that the scientific community is an internationally networked organisation that publishes and popularises its research in both domestic and international forums. All this forms only the 'hardcore' of the academic information culture.

The scientific community has an inherent *hic et nunc* perspective to its activities. You have to publish and flourish here and now; you have to be cutting-edge. In the scientific community, keeping up with changes in information culture mostly means active participation in international discussions and staying on the crest of its wave. This requires optimal integration of external factors related to the change, above all electronic publishing and social media, into one's own information culture. Publishing forums operating on the Internet, such as academia.edu and ResearchGate, have facilitated communication between researchers and moved their information culture outside of scientific libraries and their limited acquisition budgets. Technological development has intensified the academic information culture in various ways.

There are some specific questions related to this overall picture, which I will return to later. It is essential to note, however, that the information culture of research has a hard academic core to which external events are relevant only as far as they are related to the 'publish or perish' logistics of research (Moosa 2018).

In the world of research, the 'hardcore' of its information culture is linked to key academic objectives. This includes the creation and implementation of research projects that are convincing in all respects and suitably large, preferably in cooperation with other international actors. Flourishing also includes guaranteed research funding for young scholars, publishing in internationally renowned journals and publication series with a high impact factor, presenting one's own research in international forums, and so on.

However, the 'hardcore' of research is essentially linked – both in its efforts and contents – to a larger entity that affects the information culture of the research. The development of research is based not only on the successful selection of topics of scientific interest, but also on developments and factors outside the scientific world. The information culture of scientific research lives in a wide diachronic stream and an open synchronic field, which are strongly connected to each other. In all scientific disciplines, they both include interesting details, but this article focuses on theological research, which is a unique case among university disciplines.

Theology, Church and Society: Changes in the Triangle until the Early 20th Century

Theology of the third millennium is neither a natural discipline nor a discipline independent of its long history. In order to understand the current state of European Protestant theology, one must understand the historical changes through which theology has passed up to the 21st century. Understanding is based on posing elementary questions and looking for plausible answers.

Theology is the oldest European university science, which in its early days explained humanity and nature by taking the Bible and church doctrine as its unquestionable point of departure. After the Reformation, theology maintained its leading position, but after the breakthrough of the Copernican worldview, its authority began to decline. The growth and flourishing of the natural sciences and the triumph of the Enlightenment pushed theology far away from the centre of the sciences. From then on, theology has limited itself to exploring and solving its own questions and disciplines.

In particular, the independent historical and critical study of the Bible has made theologians aware of the diverse problems related to the history of Christian doctrine and has forced theology to become a modern scientific discipline. This development took place within post-Enlightenment Protestantism. At the beginning of the 19th century, F.D.E. Schleiermacher presented fundamental divisions into theological subjects: philosophical (systematic) theology, historical theology (biblical studies and church history) and practical theology. Relying on the growth metaphor that was in vogue at the time, Schleiermacher proposed that theology has its roots in philosophical theology, historical theology is its core, and practical theology represents its flourishing. It is symptomatic that Schleiermacher divided philosophical theology into apology and polemics. Thus, all theological research and teaching are scientific, but it is precisely the natural connection of research to the church that makes it theology and gathers all theological disciplines, albeit very different in nature, together as a whole. At the beginning of the 19th century, the agenda of Protestant theology became clearly apologetic: it had to defend the church and Christianity (Schleiermacher 1803).

This development affected Lutheran churches in Germany and the Nordic countries in a special way. In the aftermath of Napoleon's campaigns, the idea of nationalism was born, and it found its natural ally in Protestant churches. Under the protection of a strong state, protecting itself against subversive movements, theologians and clergymen developed state church ideology, which maintained and strengthened the position of the churches. From the middle of the century, socialism became the Enemy Number One of churches allied with state power. On the one hand, the educated upper middle class associated their liberalism with nationalism, but on the other hand, liberal thinking, together with the deepening and expanding scientific worldview, created a serious challenge for dogmatic churches. They were unable to respond to the theory of evolution and the all-encompassing understanding of the organic and historical nature of human culture. Focusing on orthodoxy, moralism and ritual spirituality, Lutheran pietism became integrated into the life of the state church and its self-protecting agenda.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Lutheran state churches of Europe were power-oriented, patriotic, orthodox and apologetic organizations fearful of change. Society was democratized and secularized at a rapid pace, but it did not affect the

membership of the churches, not even after the legislation concerning religious freedom was developed at the beginning of the 20th century. In Lutheran countries, theology served the church through hard times in the spirit of state church ideology. In Germany, idealistic philosophical models had guaranteed theology its own space in the university and society; even in Lutheran Finland, despite its very conservative basic nature, theology received its share of the German heritage (Grane 1987).

Theology and Church: Changes in Relations in the First Half of the 20th Century

“The church in the middle of the village”, Lutheran doctrine, ecclesiastical pietism, revival movements, patriotism and social influence. These parameters can be used to characterise Finnish Lutheranism and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland over the wars up until the 1960s. Theology was also done in Finland on these given terms. The civil war of 1918 destroyed even the little support that cultural Protestantism and liberal theology had in Finland. The experiences caused by the war made the church and theology even more patriotic and anti-change. At the same time, the position of revival movements in the church was strengthened.

This also influenced theological research: the dialectical theology models of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann that were embraced in German Protestant universities and crushed the tradition of liberal theology were not of interest to Finnish theologians. Instead, Finnish theologians focused on the study of revival movements and the roots of the Lutheran reformation. Both projects were naturally patriotic in character, and the Luther research had strong ties with conservative German Protestantism. Both, with their developments and twists and turns, created a long-lasting tradition in the university theology practised in Helsinki (Murtorinne 2009).

Until the 1960s, Biblical exegesis was also ecclesiastical in nature. At the end of the 19th century and for a long time after that, within the scope of theology and the church, biblical interpretation was dominated by so-called Beckian theology, which was based on the biblicist, authority- and revelation-oriented understanding of the Bible by Johann Tobias Beck (1804–1878). When positions for Biblical scholars were established at the University of Helsinki at the end of the 19th

century, ecclesiastical circles hoped that the research would correspond to the teaching of the church, and so it did, and such developments continued over the wars. The radical currents of German exegesis (liberal theology, existential biblical interpretation, etc.) were rejected in clear words. Every effort was made to avoid questioning the authority of the Bible, and research topics were chosen from amongst doctrinally harmless fields of study. In their public speeches, the Biblical scholars emphasised that the Bible is divine revelation and the Word of God. Scholars like Aarre Lauha (1907–1988) and Aimo T. Nikolainen (1912–1995), who also served as bishops after the Second World War, tried to reject fundamentalism and at the same time convey the notion that good Biblical research served God's revelation in the Bible (Peltonen 1992).

Theology, Scientific Community, and the Church: The Way to the Present

The political youth radicalism of the 1960s challenged society and the church. As industry and new forms of work developed, some pastors also emphasised the importance of social work and declaration and challenged the church to change. At the same time, secularisation and material welfare moulded the way of life in all of Europe. However, the biggest challenge to the relationship between theology and the Lutheran church in Finland was brought about by the publications of the young Biblical scholar Heikki Räisänen (1941-2015) and the interviews he gave at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. His arguments about the mythical character of the virgin birth of Jesus and the problems with the divine authority of the Bible at once opened up a radical critical perspective that all Finnish Biblical scholars before him had wanted to avoid. Many colleagues and clergymen criticised Räisänen's relativistic view on the Bible, and the reactions in the church were often horrified. However, in the following decades, the views of Räisänen, who became very successful as a scholar, became more and more common, also in the church (Peltonen 1992).

The development, growth, and employment of new scholars in theological disciplines were decisively influenced by the considerable increase in universities and research funding since the 1990s (State of Finnish Science 2000). The strengthening of theological disciplines and the growth of funding promoted the independence of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Helsinki from the church and ecclesiastical

polemics. Helsinki theologians got to know the international discussion of their own fields more and more widely than before, and they were influenced by it. With extensive and recognised international research projects, university theology has also been able to claim its place in the Finnish scientific community better than before.

Two decades ago, Simo Heininen aptly characterised the relationship between the church and university theology at time (Heininen 2001, 11): "There is no theology without the church, but it does not follow that theology should be commanded by the church. On the other hand, it is in the best interest of society is that religion, specifically the dominant religion of the society, is studied impartially and critically." The changes and developments brought by the current century have confirmed the independence and critical character of theology, but at the same time, they also seem to raise the question whether theology, or at least theological research, can exist without the church. The church remains the largest organisation whose needs are served by theology. However, its importance is in a slow but certain decline.

Theology is No Longer Needed for the Sake of the Church Alone

Some decades ago, some scholars at the University of Helsinki talked about abolishing the theological faculty and transferring the education of future pastors to the church. However, nowadays we very seldom hear of these proposals because things have changed. Unlike in the 1980s, Masters of Theology no longer graduate with a significant majority to a church position or to work as a teacher of religion in a school. Many of them have found other kinds of jobs in professional life. Furthermore, theology has strengthened its scientific role in academia. According to a report published by the Theological Education Committee of the Lutheran Church back in 2022, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is still the single most significant employer of theologians. According to the survey, 29% of theologians were employed by the church, and 16% of them work as teachers. There were thus 55% of theologians working elsewhere. Of all theologians, 34% had completed a degree that does not qualify them to apply for the positions of pastor or teacher. Since theological education has become more scientific and distanced itself from its traditional role as a servant of the church, it has become more suitable for basic education in various fields of working life.

In recent decades, the loosening relationship between the church and theology has also been influenced by the rapidly advancing secularisation and pluralism of society. The number of members of the church has decreased considerably: in 1990, 87.8% of Finns were members of the Lutheran church, while according to the latest statistics (2023), the figure is 63.6%. In such a development, the concerns of the church have moved from theological discussion to practical matters, and it has to look for modern means to speak to secularised Finns. On the one hand, theologians have produced a good amount of literature popularising their research, but that does not necessarily aid pastors in their challenges with the changing society and local communities. At the same time, theologians have moved away from theology in the broader sense. As academic competition gets tighter and tighter, theological research produces more and more specialised experts.

On the basis of all this, it could be concluded that theology is losing touch with the church it has traditionally served. Due to its educational and scientific basis, theological training provides the masters graduating from the faculty with skills for working in various professions aside from the church and school.

In the information culture of theology, we find the same question of success, with which the study of information culture once began. The strengthening and internationalisation of the entire scientific community has served the independence of theology, and university theology itself has promoted the importance of theological education for society as a whole and for various professions. The relationship of theology to the church is loosening, but such developments have been slow and natural. University theology does not have to defend its existence by referring to the needs of the church, because theology is based on a strong and long-lasting research tradition. In many respects, it focuses on phenomena whose history and effectiveness are undeniably matters worthy of academic research.

Where Is Theology Going Now?

In the old days, theology meant doing theology, talking about God by embracing and interpreting the tradition of one's own church. With the revolution in the human sciences, Western theology also began to mean the scientific study of texts and phenomena related to Christian faith. The Schleiermacher model I have described

above has had a decisive influence on the emergence and establishment of theological disciplines as they are known today. The traditional fields, whose names we still embrace, do not correspond to all the research that is currently carried out in their realm. In addition, there have been changes in various fields of theological research, in the light of which traditional discipline limits seem outdated and artificial. This is by no means surprising, because theology has been practised in the old sense for two thousand years, and in its scientific form for several hundred years.

The accelerating development of information technology, the Internet, and social media since the mid-1980s has strongly influenced the information culture of theological research. At the same time, the scientific community studying theological topics has become stronger and more independent in its relationship to churches. Has the digital communication revolution affected the theological scientific community only technically, or are there also substantial dimensions to the upheaval? Does the accelerating control of knowledge alienate theological research from the church? When everything changes remarkably quickly, does theological research lose its relationship with its own past, where research was not as global and uncontrollably diverse as it is today?

In this chapter, I discuss theological disciplines from the perspective of information culture and try to problematize the changes that have taken place within them. The question is what the academic theology practised in Helsinki communicates with its publications about itself, and what kind of social profile it has created for itself. I am interested in the tensions that come about between tradition and change. Does changing theological research have an agenda that it pursues with its new conquests? How is the university theology ready to defend its justification for existence when the social status of the church is marginalised, and the number of its members decreases?

In addition to material related to the development of theology, my sources are listings of the publications of researchers of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Helsinki from 2019 to 2023, and I also use figures of theologically relevant materials of the University of Helsinki Library from 2021 to 2023. In light

of these, it is possible to evaluate quite well what Finnish contemporary theologians read and write. In connection with different research targets, I also highlight the names of some protagonists and key researchers, so that it would be easier for the reader to find more research through them. I have excluded from my review the Department of Religious Studies, which is only marginally related to the question of the change of theology, identity and information culture.

Biblical Exegesis

Biblical exegesis is traditionally divided into two areas, Old and New Testament exegesis. These discipline designations are problematic in many ways because they are based on the old theological understanding of the Christian Bible as God's revelation. The Old Testament refers to the Hebrew Bible of the Jews, which, in the light of scientific research, does not contain predictions about Jesus and his church, but is entirely related to Jewish history and Jewish theology before the beginning of our era. The New Testament, on the other hand, is a collection of early Christian writings that developed into an inspired and authoritative canon of the church during the first centuries.

Biblical scholars study the writings of the Bible as literary and historical documents of past times. At the same time, however, its research fields have inevitably expanded to cover new fields. In the exegesis of the Old Testament covers all the Jewish history and theology of the pre-Christian era, often including also Judaic studies focused on the rabbinic Judaism.

The study of early Judaism is connected to the study of the writings and history of the ancient peoples of the Middle East much more strongly than before (Martti Nissinen, Juha Pakkala).

Over a long period of time, the field of New Testament research has expanded to cover practically all Christianity of the first two centuries. The extended areas of research include the so-called apocryphal gospels and the writings of the apostolic fathers, as well as currents outside of proto-orthodox Christianity, especially the so-called Gnosticism (Antti Marjanen). Regarding proto-orthodox Christianity, some

kind of practical border has been drawn in relation to patristics, the earliest representatives of which are the apologists, especially Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. The titles of the research fields of exegesis could very well be changed into the study of early Judaism and early Christianity. It would require significantly more for the Evangelical Lutheran Church to stop talking about the Old Testament and call it the first part of the Bible, the Hebrew Bible.

The change in the objects of the research shows that exegesis studies the Judaism and Christianity of ancient times in a wide and versatile way as phenomena of their own time. Methodically, the latest research has brought with it modern methodological and substantive perspectives such as sociology, women's studies, and sexuality research. The holistic perspective has also been expanded by growing interest in archaeology and textual criticism. While the exegesis of the last century was still oriented towards Germany at least until the 1970s, Finnish contemporary exegesis is mostly English-speaking and globally oriented. It has, both methodically and substantively, covered a considerably wider field than it had until a few decades ago.

Church History

In Schleiermacher's vision, church history was oriented towards describing the development of doctrines and institutions. After the 20th century wars, the central focus of church history practised in Helsinki was still strongly and broadly on domestic issues, and research has since expanded to cover Finland's neighbouring regions, especially the Baltic countries and the Arctic regions. The development of the last decades can be easily described in terms of the idea that the study of Finnish church history is a natural part of the study of Finnish cultural history and cultural heritage. An excellent example of this is research on the life and work of Mikael Agricola (Simo Heininen). The expansion of church history practised in Helsinki has had wider social significance, a good example of which is the study of the German church struggle that had already started in the 1960s (Eino Murtorinne, d. 2023). In recent years, church historians in Helsinki have also explored medieval topics (Finland and the rest of Europe), which has been accompanied by an investment in digital humanities (Tuomas Heikkilä). The church history of the latest era is progressing with current and politically relevant topics, for example the current state of the Roman Catholic Church and anti-Semitism (Mikko Ketola).

The study of church history does not have to limit itself to the history of churches and other Christian communities, because it expands very naturally in the direction of ideological and cultural research and of the modern socio-political changes concerning Christianity. Keeping up with the development of digital humanities strengthens the research on a vast amount of source materials.

Systematic Theology

Systematic theology studies questions related to the truthfulness of the Christian faith in the contexts of both the long history and modern times of Christianity. In Protestant universities and colleges, it has a variety of subdisciplines, but in Helsinki, it is divided into dogmatics, philosophy of religion, theological ethics and social ethics, and ecumenism.

In practice, these fields can be very close to each other, and so researchers' interests sometimes exceed traditional discipline limits (Risto Saarinen). In addition to studying Christian theology, systematic theology often includes an interest in defending the Christian faith and clarifying its tenets in face of various modern issues.

A strong traditional area of Finnish systematic theology has been Luther research, which in its more developed form has also ecumenical relevance for the Roman Catholic Church (Tuomo Mannermaa, d. 2015). In the past decades, some systematic theologians in Helsinki have published internationally significant studies on medieval philosophy (Simo Knuuttila, d. 2022). Questions in modern religious philosophy are often related in one way or another to weighing the truth value of religion's claims (Sami Pihlström). The central topics of theological ethics in Helsinki have been equality issues, medical ethics, and artificial intelligence (Jaana Hallamaa).

Practical Theology

Until recent decades, the multidisciplinary practical theology has focused on different forms of activity in the church or churches. In past times, however, it has also moved into studies including a wider section of society. The new topics includes urban religiosity, altruism and charity, as well as civic actions and third sector activities (Anne Pessi, Henrietta Grönholm). The field of religious education has also expanded from traditional topics to religious literacy and multiculturalism (Antti Räsänen). The

traditional fields of practical theology, such as the study of worship attendance and parish work, still go on, but they seem to have become side plots alongside the new directions.

Change

The research profile of the theological faculty of the University of Helsinki and the related information culture have changed considerably over the past 40 years. The fields of study of all theological disciplines have expanded and diversified from their traditional starting points. The research has become significantly internationalised, and English has, at the cost of German, become the lingua franca of Finnish theological studies. The university theology in Helsinki sends a strong signal that it is a fully academic discipline that has claimed its place among other fields of study. The image of the theological faculty as an institution educating pastors for the church and teachers for schools is falling far into the past.

At the same time, information technology and its impact on research work have grown explosively. E-mail, the Internet, various types of digital publishing, open access, social media and so on have become part of the researcher's everyday life. They cannot be seen only as mechanical aids, but they have also significantly influenced the contents of research, from the selection of topics to the possibilities of digital humanities. What has this generation-long dramatic process of change meant for the Helsinki University Library, which since 2012 has served all the university's researchers, teachers and students as one library?

Challenges for the Library

In the fall of 2012, the humanities department libraries of the University of Helsinki, as well as the libraries of the Faculty of Theology and Political Science, as well as the student library, were moved under the same roof to Kaisa-talo (Fabianinkatu 30) and together with other campus libraries (Meilahti, Kumpula, Viikki) they became the Helsinki University Library (HULib). Already at that time, the library was slowly taking steps from a collection of printed books and reading spaces towards becoming a predominantly digital library. From the beginning of the millennium, the library began

to order in electronic form scientific journals that were previously ordered as printed issues. The library bought for its customers huge databases, through which they could access a wide variety of digital materials. But alas, the digital revolution did not turn financially benefit libraries or their users, but the benefit was claimed by publishers and their brokers, who were now able to raise prices. The digital material was no longer the library's own but rented goods, the use of which had to be negotiated from a constantly deteriorating position of a dependent client.

It is no wonder that HULib has, like numerous scientific libraries around the world, in various ways promoted open access (OA). However, OA publishing has gained ground quite slowly because its breakthrough in universities would have to be based on coercion: researchers would have to publish all their research funded by taxpayers' money in OA publications that have emerged over a long period of time. A further problem is that even open publishing costs money: the author or his institution must pay the open access publisher a processing fee for publishing an article or a book. This, in turn, has brought about the problem of so-called predatory open access: especially in India and Nigeria there are countless open access publishers who are not interested in peer review of scientific articles and ensuring their quality, but only in collecting processing fees for attaching a pdf file to the annuals of journals they have invented. Despite this, and because of this, it is already in the common interest of libraries and scientific communities to promote the adoption of a coherent open access policy both in Finland and throughout the European Union.

Along with legislation, there is only one problem with publishing scientific research paid for with taxpayers' money: meritocratic vanity. At the current stage of digital development, all scientific contributions could be forced to be published first in the repositories of scholarly institutions. The responsibility of accepting publications and guaranteeing their scientific quality would naturally fall on the institution of each author. For this reason, no peer review system of any kind would be needed. Nowadays, language check programs on the Internet are already at such a high level that they can be used to correct and improve the language of publications. All kinds of quality classifications of scientific journals are part of the same problem of meritocratic vanity. A scientific article is good or bad irrespective of the forum in which it has been published. In the profit-seeking system of the publishers, the question of

the quality of individual writing is mechanically connected to the journals in which they are published. As if in the world of visual arts, the frames would increase or decrease the value of the painting they are framing.

It is no surprise that in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki, open access publishing is progressing slowly. Researchers, most of whom still prefer toll access publishing, have the option, after a certain period of embargo (usually one year), to make the version approved by the publisher openly available to everyone. For this so-called parallel storage (green open access), universities have established repositories, in which some academic publications, mostly not the final versions but drafts accepted by the publisher, are stored. However, researchers prefer commercial sites (Academia.edu, ResearchGate), where they can also publish drafts of their articles within the conditions set by publishers.

There is therefore no change in the direction of completely open publishing in sight, neither here nor elsewhere. In 2023, theologians at the University of Helsinki published a total of 225 scientific papers, of which 186 or 82.7% were published in toll access publications and 39 or 17.3% in open access publications. Of the previous ones, 92 articles, or 40.9%, appeared as hybrid publications (a paid publication, but still purchased separately as an open publication) or as permitted versions in Helda, the open repository of the University of Helsinki.

When a scholar at the University of Helsinki publishes his or her article openly for everyone to read, in most cases, the University of Helsinki pays the costs of publication, mostly with the help of the library. It is still worth noting that the University of Helsinki does not recommend hybrid publications as a real channel for open access, unless the library has an agreement with the journal (Principles of Open Publishing 2017).

Open access publishing is progressing, slowly but surely, in its own margin. However, without a legislative basis (i.e. coercion), it will not develop into a dominant channel for publishing in the humanities. In any case, everyone can evaluate the results of the development themselves already. Open access journals and books can be browsed from large databases such as DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) and DOAB (Directory of Open Access Books).

In the field of scientific publishing, the task of the library is to negotiate and rent as many scientific publications as possible and make them available to its customers. Although the use of e-journals seized the market a long time ago, researchers, teachers and students relate to e-books in varying ways, depending on the discipline and personal preference. On a general level, the transition to the use of e-books has been significant.

Already in 2011, about 80% of all journals ordered by the University of Helsinki library were e-journals, and now only a few scientifically significant international journals are published exclusively in print. The e-book revolution has taken place through book packages sold by brokers to libraries. For example, the eBook Central Academic Complete brokered by ProQuest contains more than 206,000 volumes rented by the HULib. Such massive brokerage means death to the collections: librarians no longer control and cannot even control the mass of books that brokers include in their packages. In the HULib, the customers can use the so-called e-form for their personal order requests.

While scientific libraries have to save their expenses due to frequent cuts in their funding, they also have to monitor the lending figures of electronic materials, especially e-books. Librarians have to think about what to do with printed books or books included in e-packages that no one has borrowed for years. In any case, printed literature has to be weeded out over time, and especially older, unused literature ends up in large quantities in the National Repository Library in Kuopio. Regarding e-books, the question is much more difficult, because every single book, from the much-used to the completely unused, is increasingly part of the mass book packages that brokers deliver. Strictly speaking, scientific libraries no longer have collections or collection policies.

When research communities demand more and better publications from their scholars ('publish or perish'), these often become specialists in increasingly narrow fields. The library, in turn, is trying to serve their needs by acquiring a large and diverse – and increasingly expensive – mass of scholarly literature. In the world of mushrooming publications written by more and more specialised scholars, no scholar can keep up with the material published in their discipline. At the same time, scientific research rides on the crest of the wave: everything published gets old and forgotten much faster than in the old days.

In the library, we wonder why about 60% of the materials remain unborrowed, and this generally applies to the humanities. Some books are read in Kaisa House without borrowing them, and e-books can also be opened for reading from a computer without bothering to record them as borrowed. An even greater reason is probably due to the direction of increasingly specialised research topics in the development of the humanities. A high-quality and expensive monograph on a very specific subject is valuable to its author but does not gather readers in the same way as books of a more general level. The specialisation of theological studies can be seen in the library as an administrative and statistical problem: should it be possible to change the practices related to acquiring (i.e. renting) books in order to increase the lending rate? Perhaps a better solution would be to first analyse the situation carefully.

When the separate departmental libraries of the central campus of the University of Helsinki were brought under the same roof in the Kaisa building in 2012, the big changes we experienced were not yet in sight. Until then, it had been easy to follow the development of theology's literature needs, but the past 12 years have made the library's task considerably more challenging. In light of everything described above, it has become more difficult for theologians themselves to say what they ultimately want from the library. The easy answer would be to want as many high-quality materials as possible, but no library has enough money for that. The responsibility for tracking and ordering literature (e-form) has increasingly been transferred to researchers and teachers themselves. At the same time, the interaction between institutions and the library is inevitably weakening. As representatives of traditional scientific study, theologians are not front-line users of new services (such as research data services), and open publishing has not aroused a great response among them either. The library cannot act like chuggers (face-to-face fundraisers) and force its services on theologians. It would require quite a big cultural change to move from serving to interaction, the content of which is also an open question.

Finally: Does Theology Have the Right to Exist as a University Science?

The university theology in Helsinki has become more and more scientific and internationally acknowledged over the past decades. For professional theologians, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is clearly a less significant organisation than it

was some fifty years ago. While traditional disciplines in theology are expanding and diversifying in terms of their research topics, theological education prepares Masters of Theology for an increasingly diverse range of professions that require academic training. Since it is somewhat easier to study theology than many other disciplines in the humanities, the Faculty of Theology in Helsinki serves for some students as a detour to study other subjects. At the same time, theology has also become a more interesting option for some others.

There are some big questions concerning the role of theology in society, but they do not seem to be actual or critical. They include the following: should the university theology be required to change in order to meet the needs of modern society? Should we think that theology does not even exist as a separate field of research but it rather includes various kinds of research on the dominant religion of our culture – a research whose value completely depends on the position and importance of Christianity and the church in our society?

One way to change the situation would be to break up the theological faculties and place the research of their sub-areas in a reduced form in the program of existing faculties and departments. Such a radical ideological solution would save money and redefine the position of traditional theological disciplines in a secular society. However, dispensing with university theology is not in the interest of scholars representing humanities and social sciences, because it is known that other sciences would not benefit from such a miserable fate of theology: in the end of the day, such political decisions would be all about austerity measures directed towards the universities as a whole.

It is therefore more plausible to assume that theology will continue as an academic subject, but it will naturally develop together with its different research areas towards religious and cultural studies. It is anyone's guess how such a slow change would affect the development and financing of various traditional theological subjects over time. The public and social interest in theology partly depends on how interesting theologians manage to make their science.

Conclusion: The Change Has Been Amazing

The change in all sciences from somewhere in the early 1960s has been staggering, and the change has only accelerated with the third millennium. University theology has been involved in this change, and its own change has always had its own special features. The long and taken-for-granted common path of theology and the church has gradually turned into intersecting paths in recent decades.

The change has been accompanied by a few things that led in the same direction. The number of members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has decreased considerably (1990: 87.8% and 2023: 63.6%), and at the same time the Faculty of Theology in the University of Helsinki has become more clearly integrated into the scientific community, especially with the increase in funding that started in the 1990s. The fields of theological sciences have expanded, diversified, and specialised. At the same time, the research topics have taken them away from traditional theological disciplines in the direction of humanistic religion and culture research.

In 2012, the transfer of the Theology Library to the campus library in Kaisa House strengthened the digitisation of theological sciences with numerous electronic materials and new services. However, the library has to find its role when it no longer manages and manages the electronic materials it rents out expensively, except in a limited sense. The library is trying to promote open publishing, but far away is the day when the scientific community would all at once notice how effective it would be and how much it would save taxpayers' ever-dwindling money. At the same time, the library has to compete with agile, easy-to-use and popular commercial parallel publishers like academia.edu.

The position of theological research in the broad field of society, the church and the university has changed very clearly, but its identity as theological research has remained a question that is looking for an answer.

Acknowledgements and Concluding Observations

I thank my colleagues working in HULib for the help I have received with regard to the statistical data used in this article – especially Tuula Huusko, Marjo Kuusela and Päivi Lammi. I also thank Kaisu Leinonen and Elina Kähö for the stimulating discussions and valuable feedback. However, all the mistakes that may appear in my article I have managed to make just by myself. Likewise, the opinions that appear here are entirely mine; both theologians and library staff have different views on the issues that I discuss here.

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'New Wine in Old Bottles': How Two British Roman Catholic Seminary Libraries 'At Risk' Were Saved for New Sustainable Use

Jon Purcell

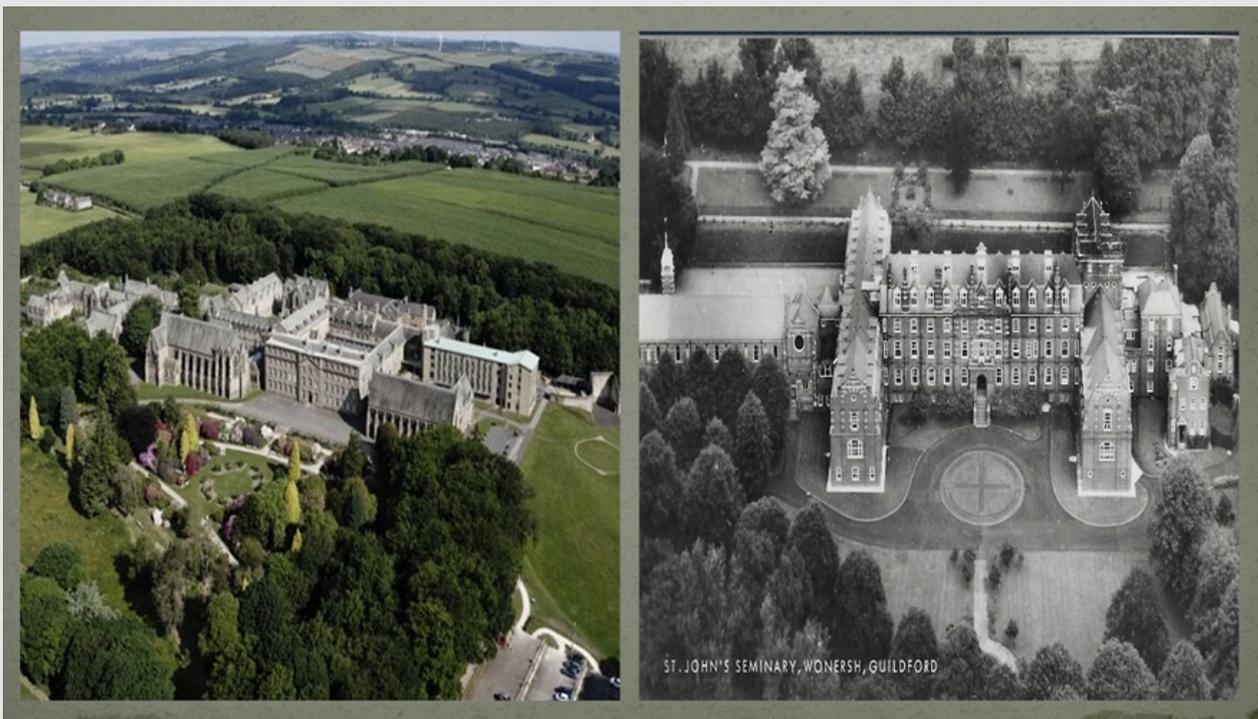
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The dictionary definition of the phrase 'New wine in old bottles' is 'an idea or approach that is presented as new and innovative but is ultimately repurposed from an established or longstanding method, system or organisation' (The Free Dictionary, "New wine in old bottles").

A simpler, modern-day description could be 'sustainable recycling', or 'finding a new and more sustainable use for old or historic libraries'. This paper examines the problem of orphaned seminary libraries built up over many generations which are deemed 'at risk' when their parent institutions close or cease to exist. Two 'at risk' British Roman Catholic Seminary libraries will serve to illustrate that, in certain circumstances, 'orphaned libraries' can survive sustainably in new and different ways.

The seminaries examined in this paper are St. Cuthbert's Seminary at Ushaw, Durham, in North-East England, and St. John's Seminary at Wonersh, in the South-East. My interest in this topic stems from my time as University Library Director at Durham University, where for eight years I was responsible for the library and archive collections at Ushaw College after the closure of the seminary. At Wonersh, I was an external library consultant asked to advise St. John's Seminary on ways in which the library could be saved and used elsewhere or in other guises.

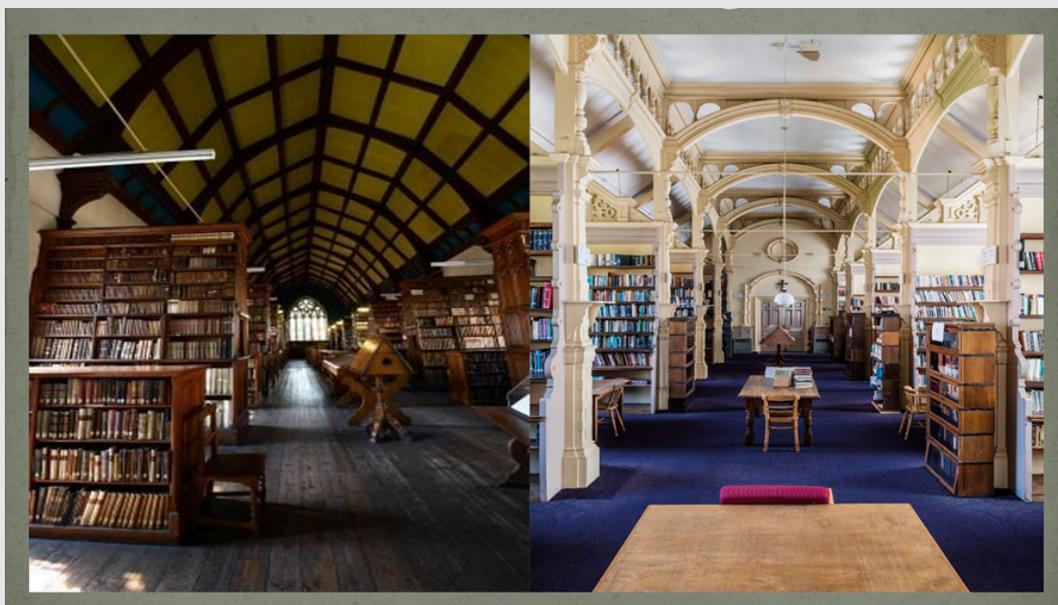
It is perhaps helpful to know a little about the context in which nineteenth-century Catholic seminaries were established in England. Queen Elizabeth I (1558 – 1603) prohibited public worship of the Roman Catholic faith in England, Wales and Ireland, effectively driving it underground until the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1828. This act allowed for a rebirth of British Catholicism and an urgent need for British-trained priests. In 1809, Ushaw became the first post-Reformation Catholic Seminary to be established in Britain since the sixteenth century, and others soon followed. In the present day, both the Ushaw and Womersley Seminaries have closed due to the decrease in vocational priests in training, thus placing their libraries at risk of being sold, dispersed, or disappearing into history.



[Image 1] St Cuthbert's Seminary Library (left) and St John's Seminary (right),
(photo provided by Jon Purcell)

The pictures above depict the Ushaw seminary on the left and the Wonersh seminary on the right. Both seminaries were designed and built in the nineteenth century as self-contained, sustainable communities, with their historic libraries containing valuable collections of national and international significance. Seminary libraries played a vital part in the formational training of Catholic priests. Mgr. Philip Hallet, Principal of Wonersh, described the role of the seminary library in 1938 as follows: 'At Wonersh the chapel and the Library stand at different ends of the building. The one the source of spiritual strength, the other the storehouse of knowledge. The one the centre of worship, the other the centre of intellectual activity. Here are the chief treasures the seminary possesses' (Southwark Record, Dec. 1938).

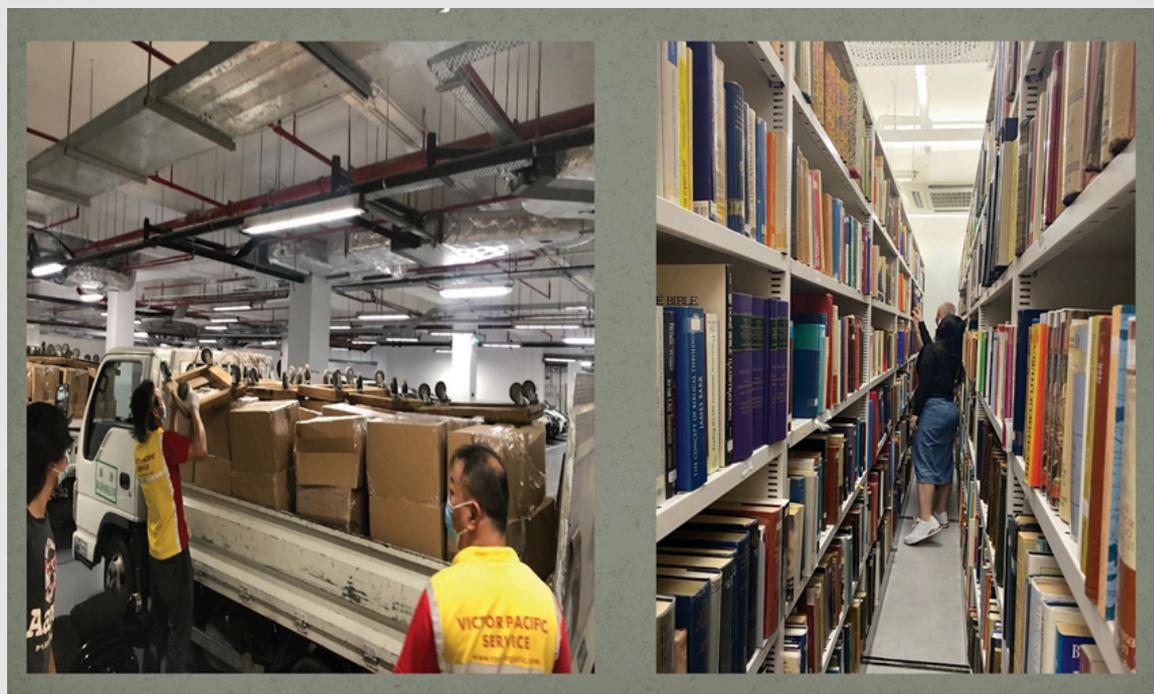
Unfortunately, in the years since this quote was written, Catholic seminaries in Britain have become an endangered species and many have had to close their doors. Reasons for this include secularisation and the decline of Western Christianity, with fewer men coming forward to be trained as priests. This has resulted in seminary consolidation and a growing perception that seminary preparation for ordained ministry may be an unduly restrictive and inappropriate method of training priests. Falling student numbers resulted in the closure of the Ushaw seminary in 2011 and the Wonersh seminary in 2022, and both were faced with important decisions concerning the future of their seminary libraries. Namely, whether the libraries would be able to survive either in situ or be incorporated into another institution, be dispersed, or even sold. The fact that both libraries have survived makes them interesting and worthwhile examples to consider.



[Image 2] St Cuthbert's Seminary Library (left) and St John's Seminary (right), (photo provided by Jon Purcell)

St. Cuthbert's Seminary at Ushaw was the first post-Reformation Roman Catholic Seminary to be established in Britain in 1809, and during its lifetime trained hundreds of priests. By 2011, however, there were only a very small number of students in training. Durham University, five miles away, was asked to take responsibility for the college library and archive, while the remaining college buildings were transformed over time into a Catholic heritage centre, historic house, and visitor attraction. Under the management of Durham University Library, the seminary library was recatalogued to full international MARC standards and incorporated into the Durham University Library's online catalogue, in effect making the library's historic and rare special collection universally accessible for international scholarship. The books once used by seminary students now receive an increasing number of inter-library loan requests from British and international libraries, and are thus still in use! A key factor for the Ushaw Seminary Library's survival in its original institutional setting was undoubtedly its link with Durham University and its incorporation into the Durham Residential Research Library ("Durham Collections Fellowships"), comprised of three significant research libraries, including those of Ushaw College, Durham Cathedral, and Durham University Special Collections. The once 'at-risk' library is now used by students and visiting researchers from all over the world, its undergraduate collections are actively sought to satisfy UK and international inter-library loans, and the library itself forms part of the visitor attraction enterprise now operating in the former seminary.

St. John's College, Womersley, was founded in 1889 and closed in 2021 with eighteen students upon a decision to sell the Seminary. A Patrimony Committee was established to find new homes for anything that could be recycled or found new uses for, including the seminary's library, archive, vestments, furniture, and art. Whilst the College buildings were sold for conversion into apartments, the seminary library found a new lease of life thousands of miles away when a former Womersley student, now Principal of St Joseph's Seminary in Macau (a former Portuguese colony and now part of China), sought permission for all 30,000 volumes of the Womersley library to be packed, shipped, and installed in St Joseph's Seminary. Thus, through this relocation, a very significant English language Catholic library has been given a sustainable future and retained its purpose of facilitating and underpinning Catholic teaching, learning, and research, while once again being involved in the formational training of Catholic priests.



[Image 3] St. John's Seminary Library being unpacked and reshelfed in St. Joseph's Seminary Library, Macau, China (photo provided by Jon Jon Purcell)

This paper will conclude by delineating the sustainability success factors as demonstrated by the examples examined in this paper. These should be of constructive use for other theological libraries at risk from institutional closure. Key success factors include:

- Seeking partnership opportunities with suitable universities or other cognate institutions where the library is regarded as an asset rather than a liability, and would be of use and value
- Being positive: tell a good story, capitalise on the strengths of library collections, and their value for teaching, learning, and research, as well as for public engagement and external grant opportunities
- Investing time and effort in a clear vision and strategy, planning, networking, influencing, and promoting in order to seize opportunities and build networks
- Making good use of champions or influencers who share the vision and can facilitate positive engagement with other potential institutions or users

- Emphasising the availability of external funding applications for conservation, retrospective cataloguing, public engagement, digitisation, access, and so on, the fact that various grant and funding opportunities are available will be useful in discussions with potential collaborators
- Capitalising on opportunities and events to enact positive interventions to safeguard libraries at risk

It is worth remembering that whilst not all orphaned libraries can be saved, there is hope and potential for many of them. There are various options available for these libraries, which may work in some contexts and situations, such as university or other institutional partnerships. Success in one context can often breed further success or be adapted for other institutions. The Ushaw 'Heritage site/Visitor Experience' model has been adopted by other British Catholic institutions. In this way, the orphaned seminary library can be part of a new, interesting, and sustainable future facilitated by the Catholic 'Heritage Tourism and Visitor Experience' framework.

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Managing a Small Theological Library: How to Color with Broken Crayons by Kris Veldheer – A Review Story

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This open access title from Atla is aimed at both those who are not already based in small theological libraries (STL) and those who are. Indeed, the introduction focuses on whether readers have what it takes to work in STL. An interesting premise and here we hit the first fundamental difference between Europe and the USA: the nature of the role and title of STL librarians.

Never have I encountered the words ‘library director’ so often in a few paragraphs. To be fair, that is in part down to Kelly Campbell, who wrote the foreword, but Veldheer also heavily refers to their own experiences as a library director and the main issues they faced, as these formed the main impetus for writing this book in the first place. But let’s face it, whether you have this title or not, as the professional librarian (PL) in this context, all the issues still apply.

The PL is the one who faces revalidation course paperwork from the library perspective, makes cases for staffing or budget increases, and ensures that senior management understands what issues STL face.

[1] Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries

Another language divide is in the use of the term “public services’, an area in which Veldheer suggests STL librarians should be proficient in alongside technical services. From a UK perspective, this must mean customer/user services. They are certainly correct in identifying one of the blessings of STL work: to be responsible for all aspects of the management of the service, including delivery, promotion, and development.

Veldheer states that they could not find books relevant to them back in 2017. Of course, St. Clair and Williamson’s *Managing the New One-person Library* (1992); Cooperman’s *Managing the One-person Library* (2014); and the ABTAPL *Guidelines for Theological Libraries* (2008) were in print at that time. However, Veldheer chooses to lean into ‘ten core topics’ from their own management practice.

These are:

- The function of the library and priority setting
- Staffing and the nuances involved in ensuring all tasks are done
- Collection development
- Budgets and budgeting to get the best value
- Service needs of users
- Solo librarians: a chapter written in dialogue with other Atla colleagues
- Cross-institutional work
- Managing up
- Accreditation
- Succession planning

Why crayons, and broken ones at that? Some of the Atla Small Libraries Interest Group members had expressed resource envy in terms of the big boxes of crayons held by other librarians. One noted that the contents of their own, imperfect, eight crayon box were often broken. Yet the irony is that the small library is the one in which the PL has to be multi-purpose. There is a lovely summary of the STL, in pages vii–viii, highlighting the special nature of the environment, i.e., one of community, not always found in larger places. There is a nod to that in the expression of thanks addressed to Atla librarians.

The tone is conversational, with questions and examples interspersed throughout the text. This is done to create a reflective situation for the reader. In each chapter, the key points are summarised and followed by the relevant references. As such, it is not a book to be read from cover to cover but dipped into so that attention is paid to the pressing elements at any given time.

For readers prone to skipping forewords and introductions, the book starts by examining S.R. Ranganathan's *The Five Laws of Library Science*. Veldheer suggests that the 'laws' outlined by Ranganathan are a useful springboard when it comes to time management and setting priorities; in effect, asking, 'What are the essential functions of my library, and how am I going to get things done?' The book explores the work of George Eberhart, former senior editor for the American Library Association, in order to provide answers to these questions.

Unlike Lucy Roper's *The Solo Librarian: A Practical Handbook* (2024), this is not a practical book, in that it does not take the reader by the hand and provide templates, but rather frames everything as suggestions. There are descriptions, however, of what a strategic plan, or goal-setting, might look like.

Here we hit a major failing of the book. Overall, whether as a PDF or hardcopy form, the text is dense and tightly packed. Despite the use of subheadings and easily distinguished case studies, the paragraphs are long. When combined with clunky phraseology, the content is difficult to process.

Perhaps the physical style was an attempt to keep the number of pages down to 167, Roper is 420 pages, as publishing is a pricey business. But compared to a Facet Publishing text, this is a very old-fashioned take on a book.

Open access books are a progressive way forward, but there is no index with links restricted to references and additional resources only. There is no way to search for key terms, and no list of case studies; neither are there footnotes or endnotes.

Solo librarianship takes up a fraction of the whole book. The chapter is said to be the result of conversations with others. Whilst stressing the benefits and advantages

of solo librarianship, Veldheer also holds that solo librarians, described as the 'air traffic controllers of the library world', must create connections in order to thrive. Yet this section is filled with examples of the author's work life, revisiting aspects found in other chapters. Unfortunately, the delivery of this content is fettered by the aforementioned stylistic choices of the book.

Does the book meet its objectives? Yes, non-STL PL will get a real insight into the situation on the ground. In addition, I think any person considering solo working would gain from spending time with the book, as would students looking for reflections on actual day-to-day practice.

The book also benefits from being accessible, as far as LIS books go, since the paper copy is affordable and there is the option to access the PDF or ePUB version online.

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Ecclesiastical Libraries: Public History, Educational Communities and Use of the BeWeb Portal

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The General Library of the Barnabite Fathers Historical Studies Centre is an Ecclesiastical Cultural Institute, registered in the Registry of Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage, in the Registry of Italian Libraries, and adheres to the PBE Pole of the National Library Service (SBN) through the CeiBib project [1].

The Congregation of the Clerics Regular of Saint Paul, called Barnabites, in the rediscovery and valorization of its own “spiritual gifts”, which are properly educational, has decided, concerning the Study Centre - General Library and General Historical Archive - to broaden its mission by also opening up to “younger” users, in particular for the Library - which is a library of conservation and specialized research. The starting point was, therefore, precisely the charisma of the Congregation and the awareness of how libraries are called today to recognise their centrality as an active part of the Educating Community, to combat educational poverty and broaden the horizons of children and young people. Therefore, the

[1] The project was dedicated to ecclesiastical libraries with the aim of responding to the needs of sharing and cooperation in the library and management fields.

General Library, through community engagement and sustainable initiatives, collaborates with schools of all levels up to the university, with institutions, the local community, and professional associations, experimenting with new, more engaging and effective teaching and learning strategies for religious history, in accessible ways for all.

It organises educational activities and research labs and carries out cultural promotional activities and public history initiatives that can bring different audiences closer to the history of their institution and to the valuable documentary collections preserved in the library and archive. Our intention: to contribute, in our own small way, to the achievement of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 for sustainable development goals. Specifically, our activities tend to pursue the 4th goal: Quality Education, and the 10th: Reduction of Inequalities, aiming to provide quality, fair and inclusive education, and lifelong learning opportunities for all. We are convinced that education can truly provide the tools to build the new skills, values, and behaviours necessary to change lifestyles and transform ways of thinking and acting.

A strategic tool that allows for wider sharing of these activities is the portal offered to ecclesiastical institutions, BeWeb (CEI 2025). The portal aims to increasingly be the expression of a distributed editorial team that involves Italian ecclesiastical realities, in order to bring out, alongside traditional ones, new keys to interpreting their cultural heritage. At the same time, it becomes a useful tool for facilitating and disseminating historical and religious outreach, giving ecclesiastical cultural institutions the opportunity to share research, communication, and enhancement activities with different audiences as active and vital parts of Educating Communities.

Among the successful examples of the various activities shared in this sense on the BeWeb portal, we decided to present, as emblematic, the video or performance of *Giovanni Alighieri, son of Dante*, conceived as a true public history project. For the Historical Studies Centre, this was a real starting point, an experience so rich that it led to the development of new paths to offer to schools or in the library as educational and training activities, always using BeWeb to enhance and promote the various projects realised. The various initiatives carried out in these years are documented on the portal BeWeb. The project culminating in the video or

performance of *Giovanni Alighieri, son of Dante* – was created on the occasion of the celebrations for the 700th anniversary of Dante's death and is closely connected to the Festival Dantesco – a cultural event organized and promoted by the Xenia cultural association – in which the General Library has been participating as a collaborating, supporting, and sponsoring entity since 2020.

The Festival Dantesco is a cultural event started in 2010, of national scope but with international significance, that aims to enhance the meeting between history, performing arts, and Dante's work. It offers conversations, book presentations, educational workshops, informal and interactive lessons, previews, performances, curiosities, as well as traditional Competitions: theatrical, short films, and photography (Xenia 2025).

In addition to the constant patronage of the Dante Alighieri Society, in 2021, the patronage and funding of the National Dante 2021 Committee were added, established by the Minister of Heritage on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of Dante's death. In this context, the project 'Public History Giovanni Alighieri, son of Dante' was born, which gave life to the video/performance – funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, under the "Living the Italian Way on Stage" call for proposals – coproduced by the Dante Festival, with Massimo Popolizio, directed by Paolo Pasquini and Enzo Aronica, which is among the twenty national theater projects currently on the "ITALIANA" portal, the showcase of live Italian theater, established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, 2021). For *Giovanni Alighieri, son of Dante*, the General Library not only hosted the video performance screenings, turning into a theatre of books, voices, sounds, lights, and colours to pay tribute to the Poet, but also supported and endorsed the project. In particular, the researching librarian contributed to the cultural framework of the script and filming.

In the video performance of *Giovanni Alighieri, son of Dante*, Dante's work and life are revisited from a specific perspective: that of a scholarly man, surrounded by the books of his own library – the ancient collection kept in our splendid Sala dei Venti – who addresses, in an imaginary dialogue, Giovanni, Dante's firstborn and Gemma, the older brother of the better-known Pietro and Jacopo, renowned

commentators of their father's work, and of Antonia, a nun in Ravenna with the name Sister Beatrice. Giovanni's biography for now consists solely of a few words from two notarial documents from 1308 and 1314, which emerged from the archives during the last hundred years of Dante studies. There is nothing else known about him. Giovanni is therefore still "paper man," a child of the Twentieth Century. The scholar – protagonist of the performance, played by Massimo Popolizio – feels a deep historical-literary interest but above all an emotional one for Giovanni Alighieri and reconstructs his biographical profile along with the Alighieri family history, Dante's work, and the possible relationship between such an illustrious father and son with incomplete identity. To delve into the facts, the scholar – in a way akin to Beckett's Krapp – has only the "tapes" of his own archive at his disposal and especially of his splendid library, where manuscripts, contemporary and ancient books, period objects, audio fragments and video testimonials recreate the past of the Alighieri family and selected verses from the Comedy.

It is worth pausing for a moment on the "tapes," reels of a 1970s tape recorder that recall the archival documents that have attested, over the twentieth century Dante studies, the real existence of Giovanni, ultimately proven in 1972, with the discovery of a notarial deed that mentions him as Dante's son beyond any reasonable doubt. Moreover, the reels also contain other information about Giovanni and the historical-literary debate about his controversial existence, still seemingly "on paper". The scholar, in an imaginary dialogue with Giovanni that sometimes verges on a transfer of identification, fulfils his desire to serve as a meeting point between a son with an almost evanescent, and somewhat denied, existence and one of the most illustrious fathers one could have. The work touches on many themes: educational, theological, historical, library science, archival, artistic (including visual and performing arts), cultural, and existential:

1. It brings the Divina Commedia of Dante closer to the public,
2. It emphasises the value of memory through the role of books and documents
3. It reaffirms the importance of Libraries and Archives, the preservation and use of books and documentary materials as the memory of the community and therefore its identity
4. It highlights the work of 'the historian.'
5. It also serves as an existential reflection on paths of fame and glory as well as the father and son relationship.

The reels, which for Beckett's Krapp certify the illusoriness of glory dreams, here become the measure of the tragic distance between a man, one of the most illustrious in world history, and a son who likely disappeared prematurely, who had that glory, so to speak, at home, within reach, and instead met a possibly insignificant fate. Within the library, choreographic interventions also develop, led by two dancers from the Spell-bound Contemporary Ballet, animated presences belonging to the secret world of books, interacting with Dante's text and with pictorial images emerging from the video projections: dancers as additional books that, when taken from the shelf and opened, reveal the life contained within.

The original music by Marco Schiavoni triggers six choreographic moments, linked to the six Dante extracts, two from the Inferno, two from Purgatory, two from Paradise, chosen in connection with the relationship between Dante and Giovanni as well as the evolving imaginary dialogue, from afar, between the scholar protagonist of the performance and the firstborn "paper" son.

The seventeenth-century library of the Sala dei Venti also witnessed the emergence in video projection – thanks to the videography of Marco Schiavoni – of some rare pages from sixteenth-century editions of the Commedia, of pictorial works, and of places connected to the Poet. The underlying intention was to make the book the protagonist, giving a visible material body to all – specialists, adults, teens, children – to history, literature, art, culture and thus to the identity of the human community preserved in the library and documentary heritage. In other words, the videos projected on the library walls of the Sala dei Venti gave life, through the images, to the content and history stored in the books, which came alive, emerged, dominating the surrounding environment.

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The Preservation and Protection of Gazi Husrev-beg Library Holdings through Digitisation and Microfilm

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History of the Gazi Husrev-beg Library

Gazi Husrev-beg Library in Sarajevo is the oldest library in this region for which accurate information is available regarding the date of founding. Gazi Husrev-beg predicted in the Vakufnama about his madrasa that: "What is left from the costs of building a madrasa, let good books be bought for that, which will be used by readers in the mentioned madrasa, and copied from those who deal with science" (Spaho 1932, 74). Therefore, we know the Gazi Husrev-beg Library's founding date down to the exact day: the 8th of January 1537.

It has been nearly five hundred years since the Library was founded, and during this time, the Library has been relocated several times. The last relocation took place ten years ago, bringing the Gazi Husrev-beg Library back to its original spot as it was in 1537.

History of the Microfilming and Digitisation Process

The earliest evidence of attempts to microfilm the holdings of the Library dates back to 1958, with the report on the Library's work submitted to the Parliamentary Committee of the Endowment Council stating that the process of microfilming the Sidžil No. 8, Mostar sidžil, and the Tarih-i Kamandža manuscripts had started. The microfilming itself was carried out in the State Archives in Sarajevo. At the beginning

of the next year in 1959, an official letter from the State Archives addressed to the Library requested the latter to pay 630 dinars in 'income for photo lab services' for forty-two microfilm recordings. The fact that the Gazi Husrev-beg library's administration took this process of transferring microfilms of individual manuscripts and documents very seriously is evidenced by the fact that the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Turkey was requested to issue the Library an official Rulebook on the transfer of microfilms and photocopies of manuscripts in related institutions of the Republic of Turkey.

In 1962, the process of acquiring the necessary technical equipment for the creation of the Library's own photo laboratory was underway, and the laboratory itself was likely to have been in operation by 1963. In addition to microfilming materials owned by the Library, the Library also carried out the microfilming of materials owned by other cultural institutions and requested that other related institutions from abroad provide microfilm copies of various materials, primarily manuscripts, in which users of the Library would be interested. There is no mention of any further activities related to the process of microfilming in the Gazi Husrev-beg library until a work report from 1985. This document refers to the need to acquire a microfilm machine due to the high costs of outsourcing this process to other institutions. In the available official documents of the Library from this period, there is no information about what happened to the Library's previous microfilm equipment.

The idea of saving manuscript treasures during the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992-1995 originally included the recording of the most important library holdings on microfilm, in order to preserve their contents from disappearance. Concern was great over the fates of the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo and the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which suffered the destruction of a large part of their collections by fire. During 1995, thanks to a donation from the Institute for Islamic Civilisation and Culture (ISTAC) in Malaysia, the Library was able to acquire the necessary technical equipment for microfilming. Despite the difficult wartime conditions, the aforementioned equipment was delivered through the Sarajevo tunnel, the only means for entering and exiting the besieged city. However, due to the circumstances of the war, there were challenges from the outset concerning the prospect of training the technical apparatus for proper functioning, particularly for the purpose of developing

microfilm. The complete process of microfilming certain library materials, as well as making additional copies, requires a constant supply of electricity and water, which was extremely difficult to deliver in wartime circumstances. Thanks to the work of Mr. Muhamed Mušić, who already had significant experience in similar jobs, most of the difficulties hounding the microfilming process had been resolved by the end of 1996. In this wartime period, the first 5,000 recordings were made with a 16mm camera on twenty rolls of microfilm.

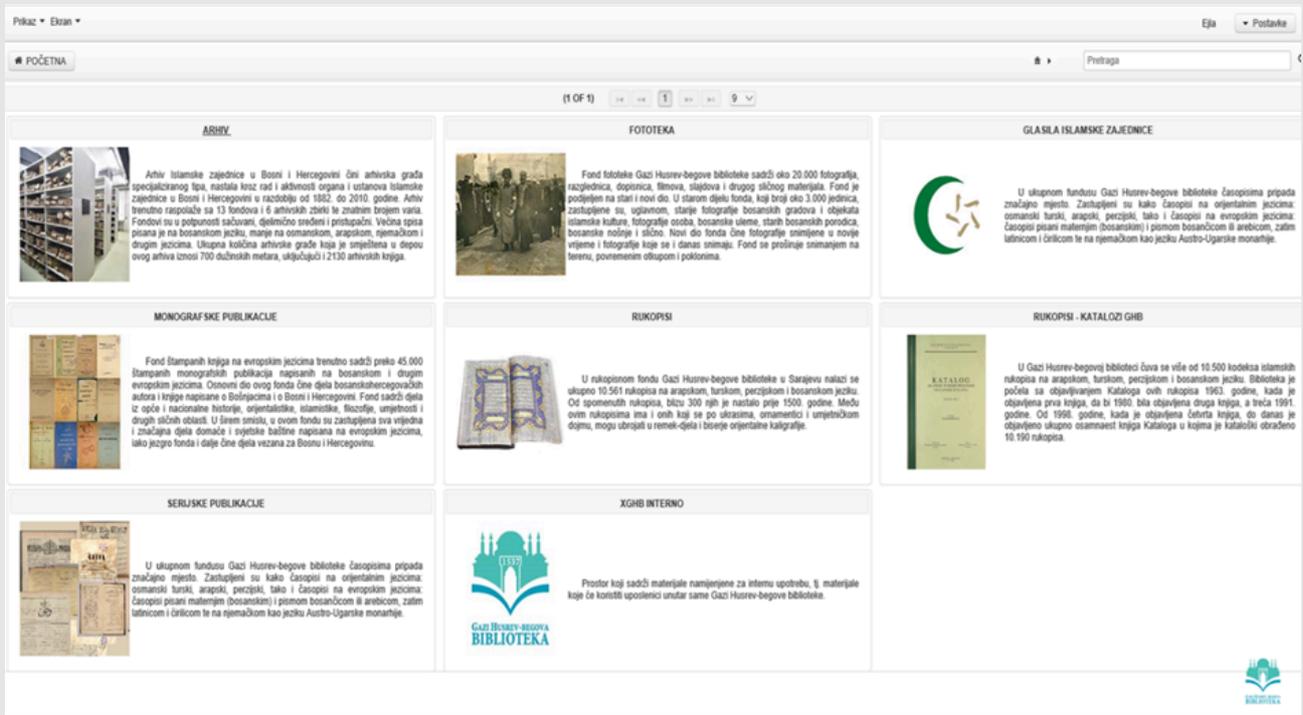
In 1998, along with the process of microfilming, the process of digitising the collections of the Gazi Husrev-bey Library began, which was a daunting and complex task given the insufficient amount of information about the process at the time. As the Gazi Husrev-bey library was a pioneer of digitisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was forced to seek advice from abroad for the many challenges that arose. The main challenges could be classified into four groups, namely:

1. Issues of the protection of physical copies
2. Technological challenges
3. Inventory of materials
4. Challenges related to metadata

The goal of the project of digitisation of old periodicals was primarily to provide researchers with easier access to information and to a large number of rare or unique library units, with as few physical restrictions as possible, and also to protect original copies from further decay and damage. It was a highly complex process which, in addition to technical preconditions, necessitated the proper training of operators as well as the material and social support to complete the digitisation process according to international standards.

Digital Repository

Towards the end of 2014, a 'proposal for the project of digitisation of old GHB periodicals' was made. The first phase was completed at the end of 2017 with the formation and commissioning of the GHB Digital Library.



[Image 1] Digital Repository of Gazi Husrev-beg Library (photo provided by Ejla Ćurovac)

This digital repository is divided into eight categories that users can search and whose content they can access, namely:

1. Archives
2. Photo Library
3. Newspapers of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina
4. Monographic publications that include material in European and Oriental languages
5. Manuscripts
6. Manuscripts: Catalogues of the GHB
7. Serial publications to which the greatest attention was paid
8. 'GHB Internally,' a space containing materials intended for internal use by Library employees

Due to the fact that OCR was conducted on complete texts, it is possible to search through most of the uploaded material by simply conducting a search for any word within the available texts. This makes it easier for users to find their desired articles and texts.

Anyone can join the Digital Library by registering. There is also the option to log in as a 'guest' with limited access to the content. The contents of the Digital Library may only be used for personal use and research, and any type of commercial use requires the express permission of the Gazi Husrev-Beg Library. The Digital Library was designed in such a way that it meets all the needs of the individual elements of the Library, and the project provides for the possibility of qualitative and quantitative expansion of software.

The act of searching and working on the digital repository has been made simple for the user. To assist with locating the collection they want to access, users are provided with a list of publications along with a picture and a short description. They can then select the publication they need and proceed to read and research it. Each page is set up separately for easier opening of documents, but also to prevent the publications from being downloaded or misused. A watermark bearing the logo of the Gazi Husrev-beg Library has been placed on each page, and on the contents of the photo library as an additional layer of protection. All copyrights have been assessed so that none of the uploaded publications that belong to the European Fund or the Fund of Periodicals are still under copyright.

The first accessible category in the digital repository is Archives. In example, there are a total of 900 recordings available to users from the analytical inventory of the Land Endowment Commission and Land Endowment Committee. Both of these sub-funds belong to the Archive of the Islamic Community. When it comes to the Bosnian and Ottoman archives, they can be accessed on our website according to certain parameters, but physical or digital access to the document itself is allowed only in the Library building or, in exceptional cases, in digital form.

The second category in the digital repository is the Photo Library. Users within the photo library have access to 172 photographs, ranging thematically from Bosnian houses to traditional costumes, but the main purpose for hosting these photographs is due to the research potential of this collection. Almost 19,000 photos have been processed and uploaded onto the Photo Library database along with their basic data. These photographs are of great significance in terms of contributions to scientific research or into the cultural history of these areas.

The third category is comprised of the Newspapers of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some of these publications have ceased operations, but most of them are still published on a monthly or annual basis. The following publications have been uploaded:

1. Annals of Gazi Husrev-beg's library (Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke) uploaded in full from 1972 until today
2. The Herald of the Riyasat of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Glasnik Rijasete Islamske zajednice u BiH) was uploaded in full from 1933 to the present day
3. Islamic thought (Islamska misao) uploaded partially from 1978 to 1992
4. Muallim – uploaded partially from 1910 to 1913 and partially from 1990 to 1998
5. New Muallim uploaded from 2000 to 2022
6. Takvim uploaded from 1934 to 2023
7. Zemzem uploaded in full from 1968 to 2017
8. Preporod uploaded in full from 1979 to 2023

The fourth category is Monographic Publications. In this section, there are 666 publications in Oriental and European languages. The Library has taken great care to ensure that these are publications whose presence on the digital platform would not violate copyright or other publishing rights. Considering the large number of publications available in this section, it forms an important microbase for researchers who are interested in the available material.

The fifth category is Manuscripts. At the UNESCO General Conference held on October 30, 2017, in Paris, the Manuscript Collection of the Gazi Husrev-beg Library in Sarajevo was included in the 'Memory of the World' Register, which is dedicated to the preservation of the world's documentary cultural heritage.

Since manuscripts are thus amongst the most valuable treasures inherited by the Library, seventy-one manuscripts from the Library's rich Oriental collection were uploaded so that researchers could get a sense of the unique and significant nature of that collection. In this sense, through our online platform, researchers can search for manuscripts that interest them using keywords or other parameters. If they find

material that satisfies their scientific and research interests, they can request the manuscript in whole or in part, physically or digitally, from the Library's professional staff and it will be made available to the researcher in accordance with internal regulations and an assessment of the manuscript's importance.

The sixth category consists of the Manuscripts of the Catalogues of the Gazi Husrevbeg Library. Almost all manuscripts within the Library have now been catalogued within its total of eighteen catalogues.

In the seventh category are Serial Publications that hold a significant place in the Gazi Husrevbeg Library. There are serial publications in Oriental languages such as Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Persian; serial publications in European languages; serial publications written in the mother tongue (Bosnian) and Bosnian or Arabic script, then in Latin and Cyrillic, and also in German, as it was the language of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. A total of 64 serial publication titles were posted, some in part and some in full.

In the eighth and final category, there is 'GHB Internally', a space containing materials intended for internal use by Library employees.

In the following sections, we will provide more information about the digitisation process and the equipment used.

Our primary scanning device is the Zeutschel Book Scanner (OS 12000). It is a professional-grade scanner featuring photo scanning capability, meaning that in addition to the traditional scanning process, it uses light to produce the highest quality images. It has an adjustable scanning resolution with a maximum of 600 DPI. It is configured to automatically save manuscripts in JPEG 2000, JPG, and PDF formats, whilst European collections and periodicals are primarily saved in PDF format. For manuscripts, the default resolution is 400 DPI.

The formats to which the scanned images can be converted are: ITFF, TIFF, JPEG, TIFF PACKED, Windows BMPs, JPEG, JPEG 2000, PCX, and PNG.

The Scanning Process:

First, sequential images are created in a folder. They are stored locally on the computer.

- Completed scanned files are stored in a folder outside the primary system.
- Scanned files are placed in a single folder (if they belong to the same document) where each page is scanned into a file named according to the page (e.g., '42.jpg').
- After scanning is complete, the files are transferred to the server machine (the entire folder containing all the files is transferred)

Later, these images are converted to PDF format (if legible, OCR is performed immediately).

- If legible, the next phase in the digitisation process involves entering the technically prepared material into Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, which allows users to search by all data entry parameters.
- The final result is a file in PDF format. OCR is completed using ABBYY FineReader software.

Steps for Storing (Processed) Images:

- The first step is to store the image in the Digital Collection folder on the server.
- The second step is to save the image to the database.
- The third step is to upload the image to the Web in the Digital Library (during this step, Acrobat Reader is used to reduce the resolution, unzip the document by pages, and add a watermark).

Conclusion

The Gazi Husrev-beg Library in Sarajevo and its nearly five centuries of history stand as a testament to a steadfast determination to preserve the nation's cultural and historical heritage. Its journey, from its establishment in 1537 to becoming a pioneer in digitization and digital access in Bosnia and Herzegovina, reflects a commitment to adapting to the challenges of modern times whilst honouring the

legacy of its founder. The Library's efforts in microfilming, digitisation, and the establishment of the Gazi Husrev-beg Digital Library have not only protected invaluable manuscripts and artefacts from decay and destruction but have also opened avenues for global research and education.

The library's innovative use of advanced scanning technology and metadata systems, alongside its implementation of Optical Character Recognition, ensures that its vast resources remain accessible to scholars, students, and the general public. With a meticulously categorised digital repository that includes manuscripts, periodicals, archives, and more, the Gazi Husrev-beg Library has become a beacon of knowledge and a gateway to Bosnian and Ottoman history.

Ultimately, the library's dual mission of preserving original materials and democratizing access to them attests to its critical role in safeguarding cultural memory. As it continues to expand its digital collections and refine its processes, the Gazi Husrev-beg Library not only honours its historical significance but also secures its place as a cornerstone of cultural heritage in the modern digital age.

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Facsimile Editions of Manuscript Books in the Collections of the Scientific Library of Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy

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Each nation preserves and protects its book heritage, takes care of it, studies, popularises and interprets it, thus bringing its achievements from the past to the future, and passing them on from ancestors to descendants. Ukraine has its own rich and vivid history of ancient book publishing. Among Ukrainian national monuments, the origins of which lie in the depths of time, the manuscript book occupies a special place. Each manuscript work is unique, and has an artistic face unique to it. Over the past decades, the work of returning original manuscripts to Ukraine in the form of facsimile editions has intensified. Previously inaccessible Ukrainian manuscripts stored in Austria, Italy, Poland, the USA, France and other countries, have become available to all those wishing to thoroughly study the most valuable monuments of national culture and understand their value in illuminating historical processes. As part of the project “Returning Cultural Heritage to Ukraine”, the efforts of the Gorobets publishing house, as well as other publishing houses, have resulted in the return of many ancient Ukrainian manuscript books in the form of facsimile copies.

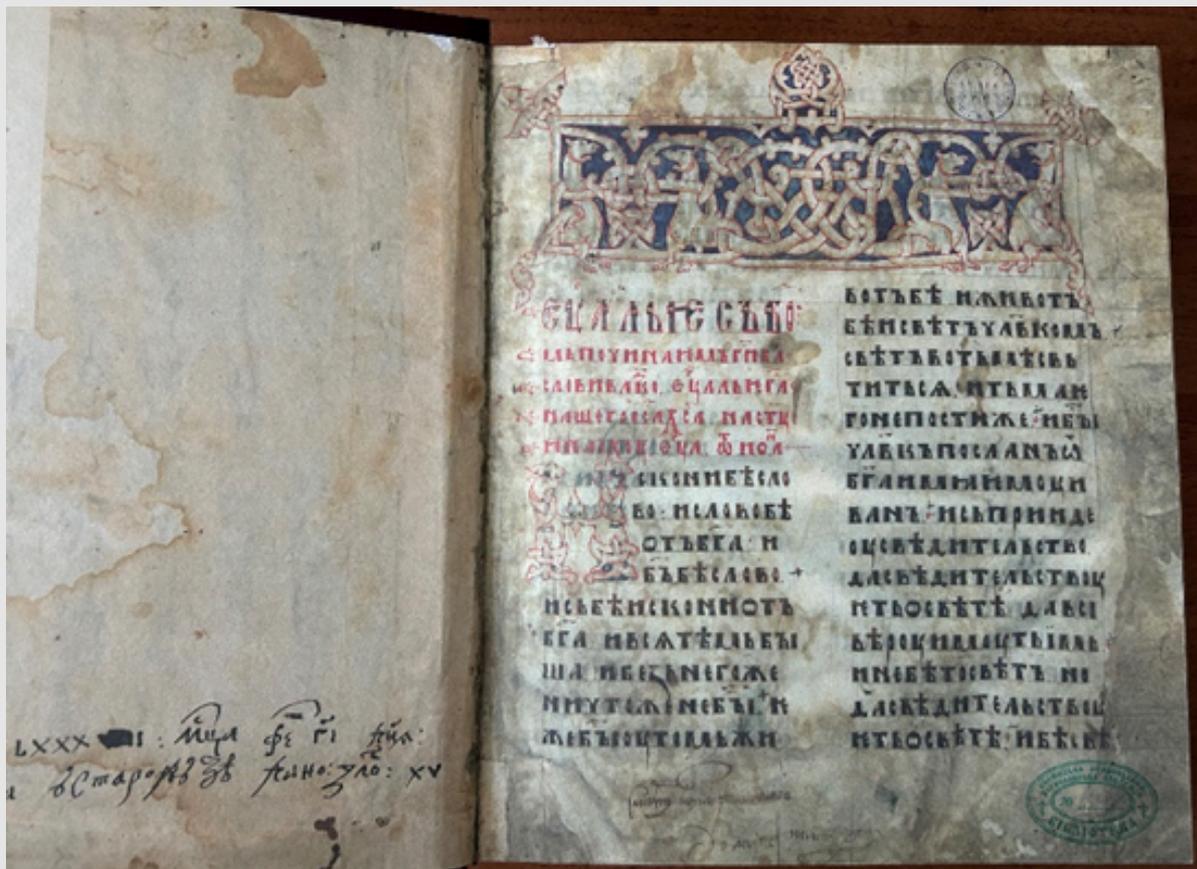
The Scientific Library of the Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy (Lutsk, Ukraine) has a considerable number of collections (Fulmes, 2023, 78–84). Among the large number of books, the facsimile editions stored in the library's collections deserve special attention, the description of which is given below.

The *Peresopnytsia Gospel* is a remarkable manuscript monument of the Old Ukrainian [CLR1] language and art of the 16th century, the first church book in Ukraine translated from book Church Slavonic into Old Ukrainian. [12] The manuscript takes its name from the name of the village of Peresopnytsia, located in the Rivne region, Ukraine. Work on the Gospel lasted five years (1556–1561). The *Peresopnytsia Gospel* is an incomparable example of a Ukrainian painting and manuscript book, as it has a rich artistic design, the decoration of which is the image of the four evangelists. Today, the original *Peresopnytsia Gospel* is stored in a special sarcophagus of the V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine. A facsimile edition of this valuable book was published in 2008 by the ADEF-Ukraine publishing house to mark the 1020th anniversary of the baptism of Kyiv-Rus.



[Image 1] The *Peresopnytsia Gospel* [Facsimile] (photo provided by Vladyslav Fulmes)

The *Lutsk Gospel of the 14th century*, as one of the oldest liturgical books of Ukraine, belongs to the monuments of the Galician-Volyn school of book writing [11]. The *Lutsk Gospel* is a complete *aparakos*, in which the text of the four Gospels is divided into separate numbered integral parts – conceptions, arranged in the order of reading on holidays, Sundays and weekdays during services throughout the year. The *Lutsk Gospel* has seven screensavers and almost 400 painted capital letters or initials. The size of the texts and decorations is preserved in the facsimile edition of the *Lutsk Gospel*. All pages are reproduced in their original form, colour and volume. All marginalia contained in the original are also preserved. The facsimile edition of this valuable book was carried out in 2011 by the Gorobets publishing house.



[Image 2] The *Lutsk Gospel* of the 14th Century [Facsimile]
(photo provided by Vladyslav Fulmes)

The *Chelm Gospel* of the 13th century, which is currently stored outside Ukraine, is part of a series of editions of ancient Ukrainian monuments, which give scholars access to the sources of Slavic literature [11]. The manuscript has long attracted the attention of researchers who have studied its linguistic features, decorative design, miniature, textology, and so on. The *Chelm Gospel* occupies a unique place in the cultural heritage of Ukraine, primarily as a unique monument of the Chelm environment of the princely era. This is a rare repetition of one of the lesser-known masterpieces of the national tradition: Chelm during the time of King Danylo Romanovych (1201–1264), the publication of which became a significant step in the return from oblivion of this significant page of national history. The *Chelm Gospel* is a complete *aparakos*, that is, a liturgical Gospel, containing readings for all days of the church year from Easter to Great Lent. The Gospel is decorated with coloured screens and initials from the 13th century. The facsimile edition of the *Chelm Gospel* is supplemented with scientific articles on the history of the *Chelm Gospel* of the 13th century, the artistic decoration of the manuscript, and on the history of the Ukrainians of the Chelm region. The facsimile edition of this valuable book was published in 2015 by the Gorobets publishing house.



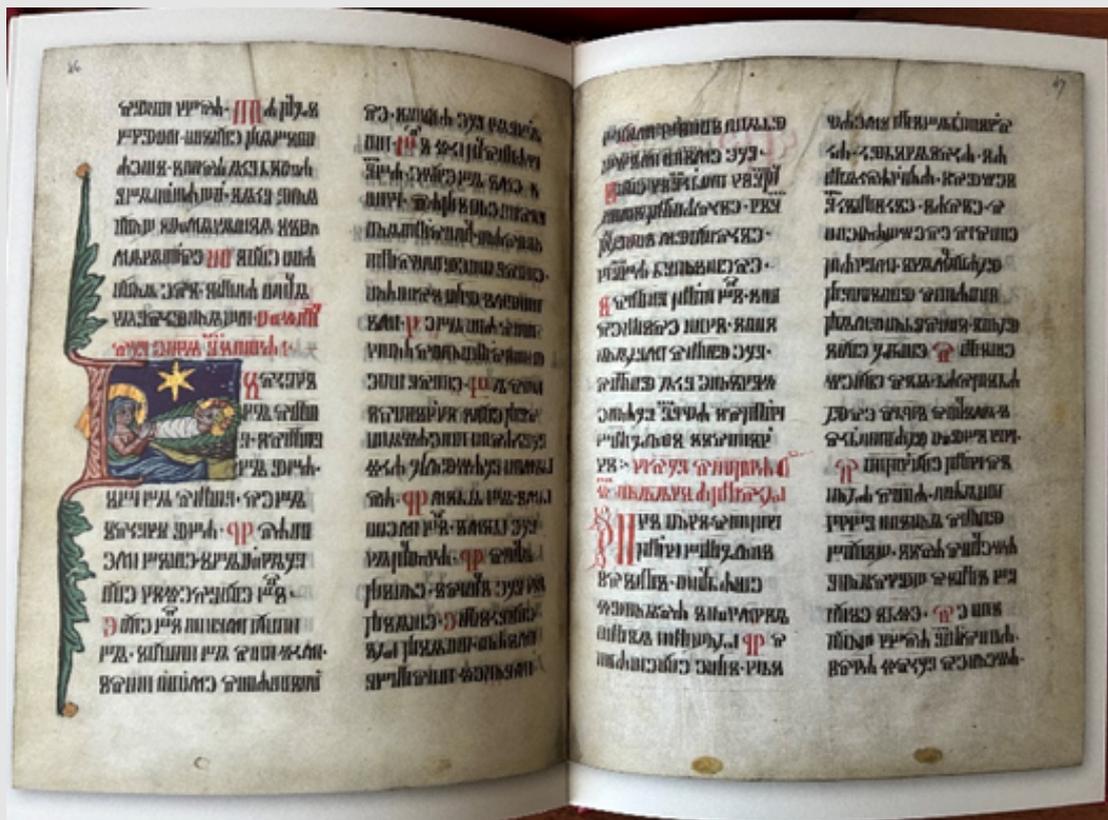
[Image 3] The *Chelm Gospel* of the 13th Century [Facsimile]
(photo provided by Vladyslav Fulmes)

The *Lauryshava Gospel of the 14th century*, which is kept in the National Museum in Krakow (Poland), thanks to Ukrainian and Polish scholars who studied the codicological, paleographic, textological, artistic, and linguistic features of this edition, contributes to its establishment of a connection with the formation of Orthodoxy and Lithuanian-Ruthenian writing in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which developed according to the Galician-Volyn written tradition. [11] The name of this religious monument is due to the place of its creation: the Lauryshava Monastery. The monument is a valuable source for the study of the Ukrainian language. A facsimile edition of this valuable book was published in 2018 by the Gorobets publishing house.



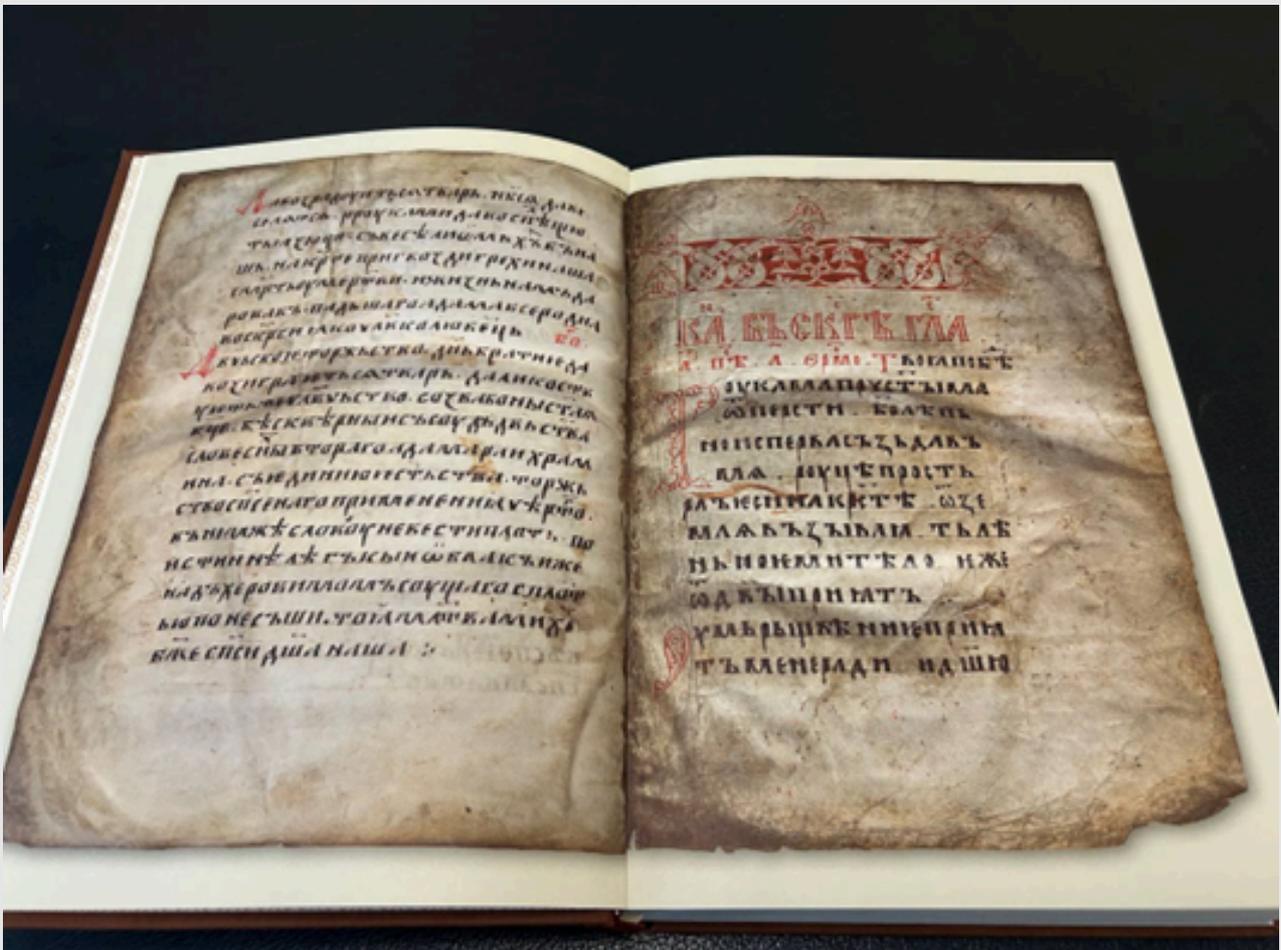
[Image 4] The *Lauryshava Gospel of the 14th Century* [Facsimile]
(photo provided by Vladyslav Fulmes)

The Reims Gospel is a famous Kyiv monument of the 11th and 12th, and 14th centuries, associated with the Kyiv book scriptorium and possibly with the library of the great Kyiv prince Yaroslav the Wise. [11] The fate of the book is closely intertwined with the history of medieval Rus, the Czech Republic, and France, and can rightfully be considered a common historical and cultural book monument. The publication consists of two parts. The first part reproduces the pages of the manuscript monument, and the second contains the results of its research by modern Ukrainian scholars, which reveals the codicological, paleographic, artistic and linguistic aspects concerning Cyrillic features of the codex, as well as the history of its creation, existence and study. A facsimile edition of this valuable book was published in 2019 by the Gorobets publishing house.



[Image 5] *The Reims Gospel* [Facsimile] (photo provided by Vladyslav Fulmes)

The Vienna Octoechos of the late 12th and early 13th centuries, currently kept in the Austrian National Library, is among the oldest surviving works of the Galician-Volynian manuscript tradition of the princely times. [11] It is one of the oldest surviving universal collections, containing almost a complete set of texts necessary for divine service (the Six-day service with the Gospel and Apostolic readings for the Octoechos, the festive Minya, and the general Minya by Clement of Ohrid, hymns of minor genres). A facsimile edition of this valuable book was published in 2019 by the Gorobets publishing house.



[Image 6] The Vienna Octoechos [Facsimile] (photo provided by Vladyslav Fulmes)

Prince Vladimir's Psalter (The Prayer Book of Prince Volodymyr) of the 14th century is an important liturgical monument of the 14th century. Access to the *Prayer Book of Prince Volodymyr* was restricted for a long time due to it being in the private collection of the Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA, Metropolitan Ioann Teodorovych (1887–1971). The manuscript was transferred to the New York Public Library in 1994 and became widely available, which resulted in the appearance of several meaningful publications about it in subsequent years. Its facsimile edition and the modern scientific research contained in it will contribute to further in-depth scientific research both of the monument itself and of the study of Ukrainian manuscript literature in general. The facsimile edition of this valuable book was published in 2021 by the Gorobets publishing house.



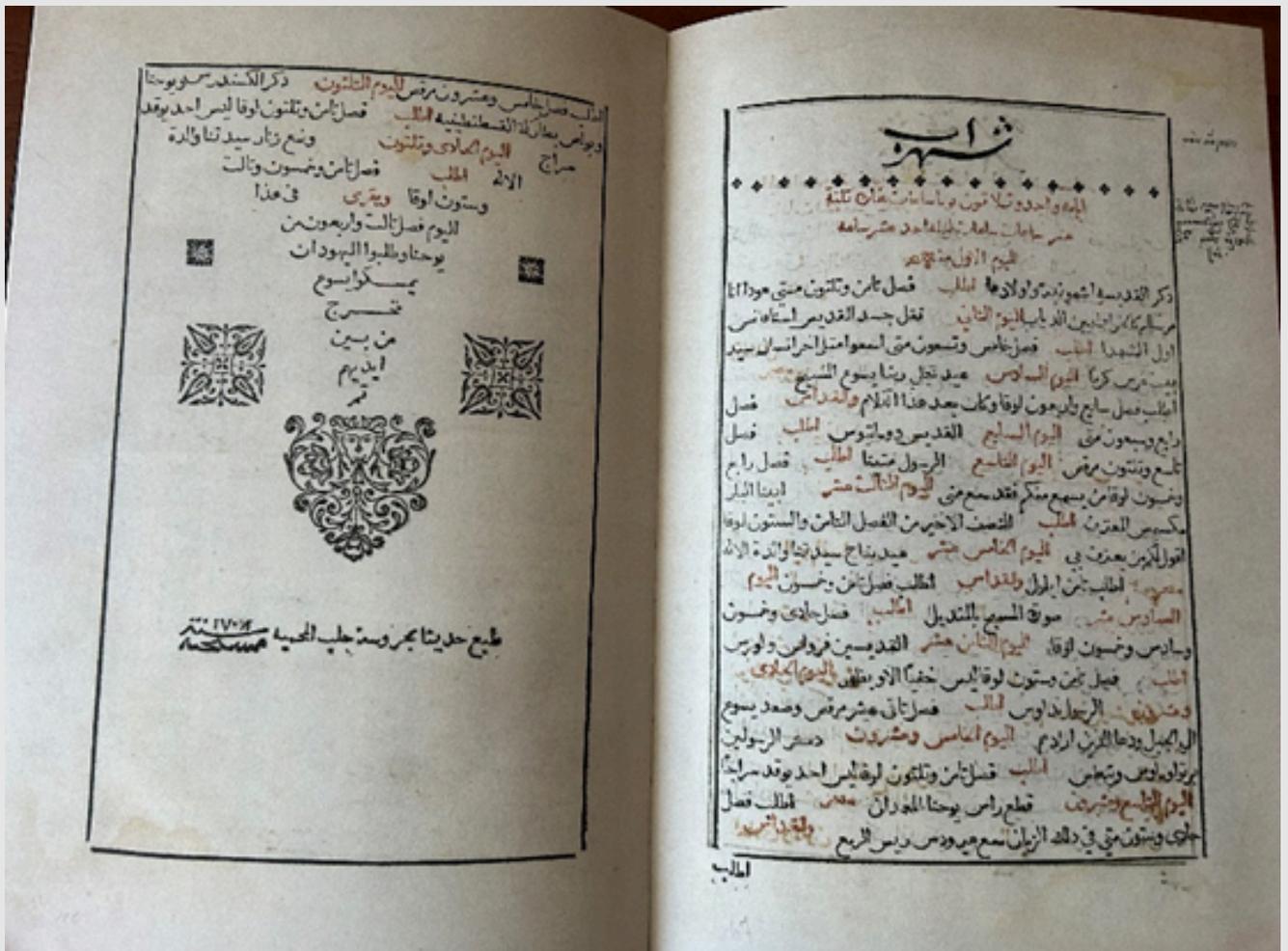
[Image 7] *Prince Vladimir's Psalter (The Prayer Book of Prince Volodymyr) of the 14th Century* [Facsimile] (photo provided by Vladyslav Fulmes)

The Galician-Volyn Gospel of the 12th century is a valuable source for the study of Church Slavonic in the Ukrainian edition, as it contains the linguistic features of the contemporary inhabitants of Galicia and Volyn. In terms of structure, this is a complete Gospel-*aparakos* with an added monthly dictionary. The facsimile part is supplemented by a scientific part containing historiographical, linguistic-orthographic, and artistic research. The facsimile edition of this valuable book was carried out in 2024 by the Gorobets publishing house.



[Image 9] The *Galician-Volyn Gospel* of the 12th Century [Facsimile]
(photo provided by Vladyslav Fulmes)

The Book of the Honest Immaculate Gospel, the Lamp that Shines and Illuminates (The Mazepa Gospel) is part of Ukrainian national historical heritage. [11] The outstanding monument was first published three centuries ago (1708) in the Syrian city of Aleppo at the expense of the Hetman of Ukraine, Ivan Mazepa. and contains a dedication to the Hetman-patron, written by the Patriarch of Antioch Athanasius III Dabbas. This book is evidence of the ancient historical ties of Ukraine with the Levantine Middle East, as well as the discovery of a virtually unknown episode in the life and activities of Hetman Ivan Mazepa.



[Image 10] *The Book of the Honest Immaculate Gospel, the Lamp that Shines and Illuminates (The Mazepa Gospel)* [Facsimile] (photo provided by Vladyslav Fulmes)

Thus, it can be stated that the facsimile reprinting of unique manuscript books and the storage of these editions by libraries, in particular the Scientific Libraries of Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy, provides access for a wide range of readers to corner rare, unique East Slavic monuments of Christian culture and the history of the Ukrainian language. The publication of facsimile editions with thorough scientific research has created a significant base for further long-term research into the history of the manuscript book and national culture, with its influence on the spirituality of society and its cultural potential.

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Digitisation of Old Prints and Archival Collections of Monastic Provenance in Church Theological and State Libraries as a Chance for Sustainable Development [1]

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Theological old prints and archival collections are the pride and joy of every monastic and state library. They are of interest primarily to professional theologians, book and church historians, bibliologists, museologists, but also amateur bibliophiles. Due to their uniqueness and importance for human culture, they are priceless and closely guarded in the mentioned libraries. Thanks to the digitisation of old prints and archival collections, it is possible to study and view them without leaving home or the workplace.

According to Riley (2024, 33), there are two important components for digital libraries: technologies of the internet and web, and community-based society, which “are so closely knitted that it is hard to think of them separately in the digital environment as technology needs users”. In Polish literature on the other hand, “digitisation is understood as the technology of making collections available and the process of creating digital libraries” (Szymański 2015, 189).

[1] This article is based on a presentation given at the BETH Sarajevo conference in 2024.

The role of digital libraries and archives is the preservation of knowledge, and democratising information access by providing better access to archival and library materials via IT networks. This enables education and lifelong learning support, as well as a community building, communication, and collaboration platform. Digital libraries supplement the existing resources, support popularisation of library and archive collections, and can merge archival and library materials that are physically stored in different locations, for example in different institutions, even outside the country's borders (Krawczak 2012, 80; Dowgiąło 2023, 104; Riley 2024, 34).

Thanks to the digitisation of library inventories and catalogues, especially those from the 16th to 18th, and even 19th centuries and old prints and making their availability on web platforms, it has become possible to read them on your own computer and smartphone anywhere in the world, even in your own home. Thanks to this, you don't have to go to archives and libraries, which are often many kilometres away from your place of residence or work, especially in the case of foreign archives and libraries. The time saved thanks to this can be used more effectively for the so-called processing of source material, namely its analysis. In the case of personal arrival at a stationary archive, that is to say not online, you can use their resources only during the hours they are available to readers. This causes the stress, of whether I will manage to use all the sources I need. If it turns out that I did not have enough time, I will have to come there again instead of using more time for the aforementioned, more detailed analysis of inventories.

Now, the cost of travel to libraries and archives is often expensive. Researchers from universities receive money (in Poland, most often as part of grants) for source queries in archives and libraries, from which they finance travel to them. However, independent researchers who are not associated with universities and scientific institutions, do not have such funds and must cover the costs of their research, including travel to archives and libraries, from their own financial resources. Sometimes this even limits the scope and accuracy of queries, and sometimes result in the lack of answers to important questions. Digitisation and making the materials we are interested in available on the Internet come to the rescue in these scenarios. Digitisation of valuable old documents allows for faster access to them (Król 2005, 174).

Therefore, we must agree with Hannie Riley (2024) that

[...] One of the most profound impacts of digital libraries is the democratisation of information [...] 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 (35).

Libraries and archives, understood as information institutions, help create an information society (Król 2005, 170).

According to Strzelecka and Sulejewicz-Nowicka (2022, s. 34) and Król (2005, 173), old prints published online make it easier for researchers to conduct comparative, textual, and editorial research. They allow for drawing conclusions regarding geography, topography, languages, the activities of their creators and producers, editorial and typographic features of individual printing houses, and the characteristics of their publishing production, tracing the course of, for example, political, economic, and philosophical movements and ideas.

Digitisation and placing documents in digital libraries cannot end the work on them. In activities of a cultural, scientific and informational nature, it is necessary to take into account collections placed in digital libraries, which are beginning to take over the role of the reader's place of first contact with documents (Fischer and Michalski 2018, 134).

The digitisation of library inventories and catalogues and old prints improves research in the field of historical disciplines of contemporary book studies (Król 2005, 174). After all, one of the roles of the digital library is promotion by providing resources from various fields of study in one accessible platform. This fosters collaboration and innovation (Riley 2024, 39).

On the other hand, Król (2005, 170, ref. 4) seems to be worried that a book in digital form is no longer a book because "it loses the bond with the strictly defined

character of the original version and becomes merely its online publication.” There are changes in its structure, often in the linguistic-pregnant layer, diacritical marks, and different aesthetic values appear in the form of files: “When digitally converted into newly published written texts, they are often mutilated”(Król 2005, 170, ref. 4).

Placing a given object (a book or handwritten document) in a digital library, creating a digital backup, serves to protect it, both against theft and the destruction caused by the passage of time or human activity. (Dowgiąło 2023, 104; Krawczak 2012, 79; Strzelecka and Sulejewicz-Nowicka 2022, 33;). Therefore, digital libraries play an important role in preserving knowledge for future generations (Witczak 2012, 107; Riley 2024, 34). It is therefore necessary to preserve old printed materials for future generations “[...] by ensuring safe conditions for old collections that should no longer be made available in the traditional way” (Król 2005, 174).

On the one hand, digitalisation is about protecting the material form of the most unique and valuable collections, and on the other hand, it opens access to collections that are particularly protected. Objects that have so far been viewed by a narrow group of specialists and researchers are now available to a wide audience – the academic community, Polish and foreign scientific and cultural institutions, and all interested parties. From the perspective of users of platforms [...], digitisation enables quick access to source materials. From an international perspective, this is important for research on cultural heritage, conducted jointly by research centers from different countries (Strzelecka and Sulejewicz-Nowicka 2022, 34).

Increasing number of archives and libraries, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic scan their collections at the request of readers and send them by e-mail to the interested party. Thanks to this, you can use the collections made available on the Internet in libraries and digital archives on your own computers anywhere in the world.

Conclusion

Digitising an old print or manuscript protects them from destruction or theft. Placing them in a digital library and publishing them on the Internet contributes significantly to the democratisation of access to the information contained in them: everyone can now view and read them. It also facilitates global scientific research on the digitised texts contained in them. It is a sustainable development in access to knowledge and scientific research on old prints.

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The Spanish Library Church Union Catalogue: A Success Story

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ABIE, the Spanish Association of Church Librarians

ABIE is the acronym for Asociación Española de Bibliotecarios de la Iglesia (Spanish Association of Church Librarians). There were several attempts to fund the creation of such an association in 1969, 1972, and 1985 (Valle, 2007). The initiative finally succeeded in 1991, and its statutes were approved by the Spanish Bishop Company in 1993.

Since 1997, ABIE has represented Spanish Church Libraries at the Assembly of the European Association of Theological Libraries, which goes by its French acronym, BETH (BETH, 'About us').

Just like other Spanish Church associations such as those of archivists and museumists, it is necessary to bear in mind that the ABIE is a professional association of people, not libraries. It is therefore challenging to tackle large projects because its members are not always in charge of their libraries, as they are technicians, not directors.

[1] Spanish Association of Church Librarians.

processes, acquisitions, standards, training, an interlibrary loan system, and the staff required for such an undertaking. Ultimately, the high financial burden of such a project prevented us from finding the right sponsorship to enact it.

In 2022, ABIE returned to this old dream with a different approach. We thought there would be more chances of success if we initially started small. We could then, in time, expand the project by tackling individual objectives such as an interlibrary loan system and the setting of common cataloguing standards.

We were unfortunately unable to persuade the IT Service of the Spanish Episcopal Conference to host the catalogue online. It was therefore likely that we would have to fund this ourselves. Due to these circumstances, we were aware from the outset that the collective catalogue would be a project that would have to be predominantly self-financed. In the following, we examine the chosen model.

Looking for Tools and Companies

It was clear to us from the start that we would be relying on free software to create the platform due to the variety of companies and price ranges to choose from. After deliberating between Koha and Vufind, we opted for the latter because we only needed one platform for the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), where facilities for cataloguing, lending, and acquisition were not needed, and because Vufind is more adept at integrating records from different data sources.

With these basic parameters established, we contacted various Spanish companies that could offer us the installation and configuration of Vufind as well as hosting and maintenance. After meetings with half a dozen companies, we selected the company Xercode to manage our union catalogue.

Why Vufind?

VuFind is developed and maintained by an international community of contributors supported by the Open Library Foundation and generous sponsors such as Villanova University. Over 202 developers have contributed to the project over its entire

history, with fifty-one developers active during 2024. VuFind is a discovery system designed and developed to create search interfaces for all types of content and sources, including:

- Catalogue records
- Content from institutional repositories
- Articles from open-access journals
- Digitised materials from the library
- Websites
- Items available for inter-library loan
- Licensed content (where permitted by providers)
- Other collections and resources (simply by adding the metadata!)

Functionalities

Some of the more interesting functionalities of Vufind are:

- The VuFind® search index is powered by Apache Solr, an open-source search engine, offering great performance
- Basic or advanced search box and refining by facets
- Real-Time Access Catalogue (only for catalogues with OAI)
- User account to save searches, create alerts, and mark favourites
- Persistent URLs
- Multilingual interface
- Integration of different contents/sources
- Exportation of bibliographic reference to Zotero (or others)
- Automatic placement of covers

Integration of Contents and Sources

Through Vufind, our content is not restricted to bibliographic records from libraries. In the case of my university library, we have the option to include electronic books and journals packages, records from our institutional repository, and business news or legislation.

As it is open source, you can modify or add modules to better adapt it to your needs. A wide range of configurable options allows for extensive customisation without the need to rewrite code. Furthermore, access to an active international community of users, as well as a variety of merchant service providers, ensure that you can get support when you need it.

Features

Funding

Incorporation into the Union Catalogue was free for the duration of the first year of the project so that prospective member institutions could try it out and explore its advantages. The financial sustainability of this project is fully sustained by participating libraries. It was decided that each library would contribute to costs according to its capacity. According to internal agreements, there are two price ranges: one for 'big' libraries (mainly university libraries) that pay €800 per year and 'little' libraries that pay only €150. In the case of very small libraries with a fixed catalogue ('dead' libraries), the inclusion of their MARC records is done free of charge. Thus, this is a project based upon mutual support since bigger libraries enable smaller ones to pay a reduced price.

The collective catalogue has been an invaluable opportunity for small libraries that did not previously have the capacity to create an OPAC. Furthermore, each library has its own URL for its records in the union catalogue.

Uploading Records

The chosen model is mixed; an automatic upload by OAI (when available), and manual upload following the model of Rebiun (the Spanish university library net), a union catalogue with quarterly record manual uploads using FTP protocol and a basic deduplication system.

Just as Vufind allows for the integration of other data sources, we do not rule out including records of electronic books, journals, institutional repositories, and so on.

Working Group

A working group has recently been set up to manage the union catalogue. The group has defined an institutional agreement text, agreed to a price policy according to institution size, and set common cataloguing standards.

Setting Up

The first step was to check the library software used by each library to see if they had the OAI-MPH protocol, and to study the MARC records to make a map of the MARC labels used by each institution.

MARC Field Mapping

In the next image, we can see part of a spreadsheet with the name of the library, its library software, whether OAI was available and its URL, formats of the registers, and the URLs of the OPACs.

Nombre de la biblioteca	Sistema de gestión	¿OAI?	Formatos	Volúmenes	¿OPAC?	URL del OPAC
Universidad Loyola - Colectivo		https://colectivo.uloyola.es/OAI/Server?verb=ListRecords&metadataPrefix=marc21				
Universidad Loyola	Librisuite/Vufind	https://catalogo.uloyola.es/	MARC21	65.000	SI	https://catalogo.uloyola.es/
Universidad Loyola - Granada	Librisuite/Vufind	https://catalogo.uloyola.es/	MARC21	142.417	SI	https://catalogo-teologia-granada.uloyola.es/
Biblioteca de la Universidad Eclesiástica	Koha	http://koha-opa	MARC21	223.578	SI	https://catalogo.sandamaso.es/
Conferencia Episcopal Española	OdiloTID	NO	MARC21	76.300	SI	https://cee.odilo.es/jopac/
Biblioteca Seminario Metropolitano	Koha	SI	MARC; CSV	20.000	SI	https://www.bibliotecasiglesiadeasturias.es/
Biblioteca Facultad Padre Ossó	Koha	SI	MARC; CSV	5.400	SI	https://www.bibliotecasiglesiadeasturias.es/
Institución Colombina	AbsysNET	NO	MARC 21	33.373	SI	https://opac.icolombina.es/opac/
Red de Bibliotecas Iglesia Navarra (Se	Koha	En construcción	En construcción	91.383	En construcción	http://catalogo.bibliotecasiglesianavarra.es/
Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca	Koha	SI	MARC / CSV / XM	672.396	SI	KOHA.UPSA.ES
Biblioteca Diocesana Córdoba	Koha	http://redbiblio	MARC, CSV, TXT	77.000	SI	http://catalogo.redbiblio.es/
Universidad de Navarra	Innopac	?		1.600.000	SI	https://innopac.unav.es/
Biblioteca Instituto Superior de Teología	Koha	http://catalogo	MARC, XML, CSV	68.429	SI	http://catalogo.istic.es
Universidad de Deusto	Alma	NO	MARC	667.606	SI	https://oceanobiblioteca.deusto.es/primario
Comillas	AbsysNET	SI	MARC21	630.000	SI	https://biblioteca.comillas.edu/digital/ab
Biblioteca Diocesana Bilbao	AbsysNET	NO	Marc21, MarcXM	65.404	SI	biblioteca.bizkeliza.org/opac

[Image 2] Example of MARC Field Mapping (Image provided by Fran Cortés)

We then examined every library for the quality of their MARC records using two objectives. Firstly, to try to improve the records in origin, that is, in the different catalogues, and secondly, to ensure the best situation of the registers when uploading them to the union catalogue.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	
BIBLIOTECA	ULG: Universidad Loyola - Granada										
SISTEMA	Librisuite/Vufind										
OBSERVACIONES											
OAI FUNCIONAL	SI	No tiene en cuenta borrados							001 => Control Number		
Tag fondos	852	Los registros no tienen el namespace:							003 => Control Number Identifier		
Tag Identificador	001	xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance"							005 => Date and Time of Latest Transaction		
		Hay que incorporarlo para que sean válidos							006 => Fixed-Length Data Elements -- Addi		
									007 => Physical Description Fixed Field		
									008 => Fixed Length Data Elements		
Subcampos fondos	Valor ejemplo	Significado								016 => National Bibliographic Agency Contr	
										017 => Copyright or Legal Deposit Number	
	2 Sello en port. "Bi ?									020 => International Standard Book Numbe	
	8	1 ?								022 => International Standard Serial Numbe	
	9 R. 41392	?								024 => Other Standard Identifier	
	a Fondo Antiguo, ?									026 => THIS FIELD IS NOT STANDARD!!	
										027 => ...	

[Image 3] Example of Characteristics of MARC Labels (Image provided by Fran Cortés)

In this image, we can see an example of characteristics of MARC labels of a participating library, and comments on changes to be done (internally into the union catalogue or in the catalogue of origin).

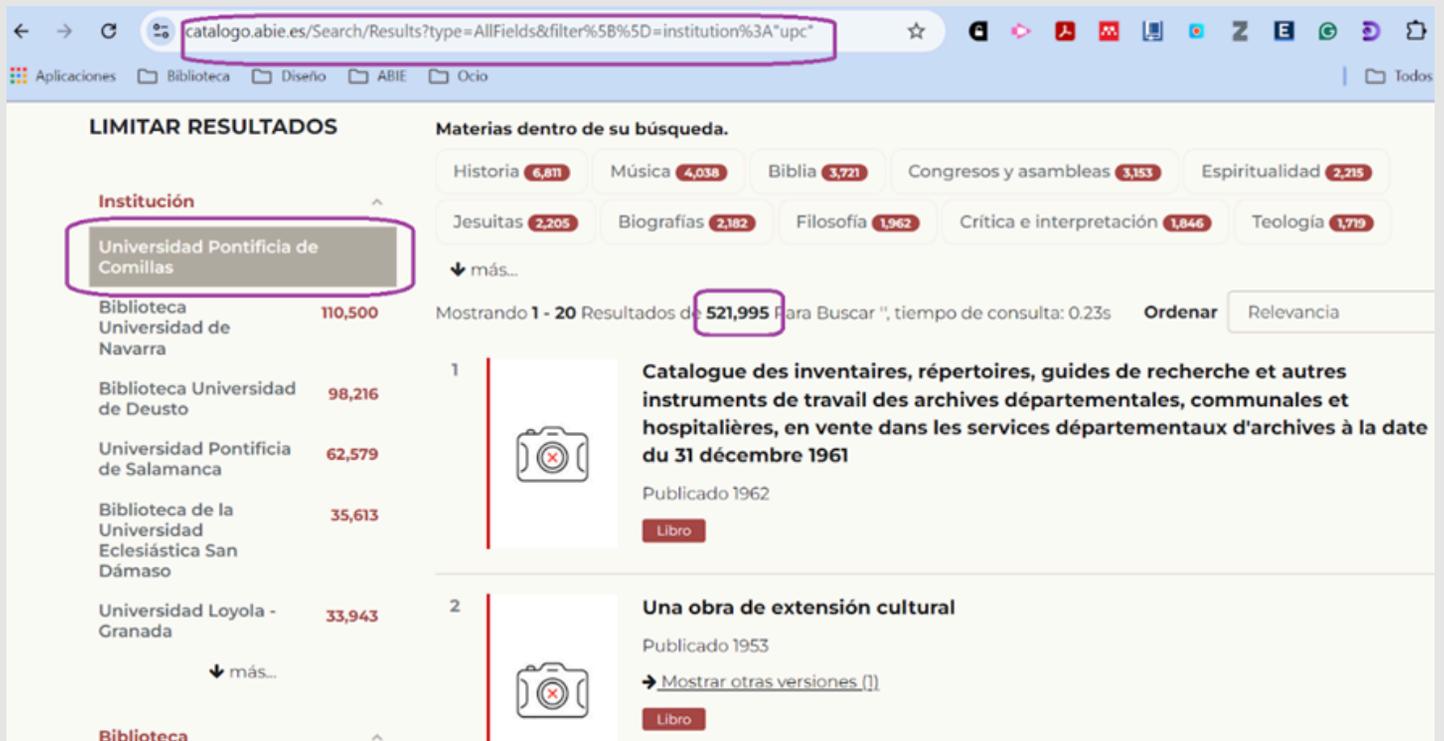
After this, a basic deduplication algorithm was configured to unify repeated records. Finally, we upload the registers automatically by OAI (when available) or send them via FTP protocol (each library has its own FTP account and updates its registers four times a year).

Current Situation

The union catalogue of Spanish Church Libraries currently contains five million registers corresponding to twenty-five institutions, with the expected arrival of an additional million with the next wave of collaborating libraries.

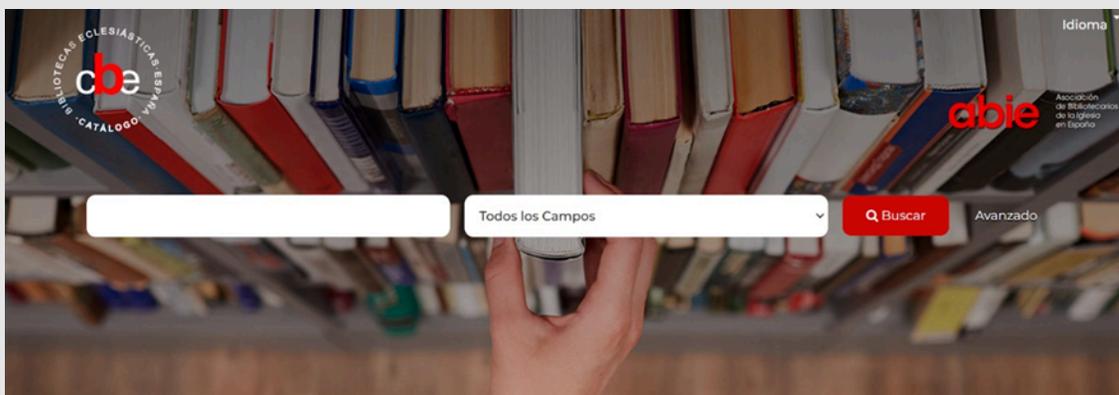
The catalogue specialises in books about Theology, Religion, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and stands out for its bibliographic patrimony of church libraries. To offer some perspective, there are 3,260 books from the fifteenth century, 32,008 from the sixteenth century, and 51,830 from the seventeenth century.

Vufind was configured so that the records of each library could be consulted through facets, giving each institution differentiated visibility (including its own URL, acting as its own catalogue).



[Image 4] Example of the URL for an Individual Library Catalogue, the Universidad Pontificia Comillas Catalogue (Image provided by Fran Cortés)

At the end of 2024, we launched a new website for the union catalogue with a new URL, <https://www.bibliotecaseclesiasticas.es> (churchlibraries.es), to host not only the catalogue but to also showcase upcoming projects related to cataloguing and other future ideas.



[Image 5] The New Union Catalogue Website (The image provided by Fran Cortés)

Coming Soon

We continue to contact new institutions to join the union catalogue, gathering a total of almost eight million items, from the catalogues of other individual libraries and the union catalogues of certain Religious Orders not currently participating. Although it will be a decision that must be taken by the working group, in the future we aspire to include registers from other sources such as online books, journals, and institutional repositories. This is one of the reasons we opted for Vufind as the OPAC for the project, as we are looking forward to future integrations of additional sources other than catalogues of MARC records.

The collective catalogue aims to be a starting point for building a network of Church libraries in Spain, complete with common cataloguing standards, an inter-library loan procedure, and a training calendar.

Future Ideas

Future projects connected to the union catalogue include an institutional repository and common library management software. Following the footsteps of the union catalogue's sustainability plan, libraries interested in tackling repository or library software must contribute economically according to their capacity.

In the case of the institutional repository, ABIE's objective is to offer small libraries the opportunity to ask for public financing to digitize their historical funds since there is public funding available for digitization in Spain if the files are uploaded to an open repository.

We also hope to provide smaller libraries with a library management system if they do not have software such as Inmagic or other basic library software. Depending on demand, we could offer a module for cataloguing as well as lending and acquisitions.

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TURBETTALVAREZJAIME.pdf

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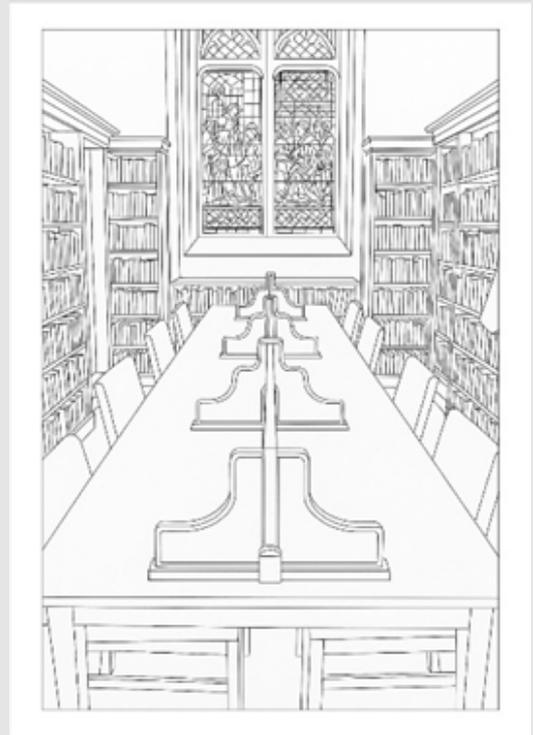
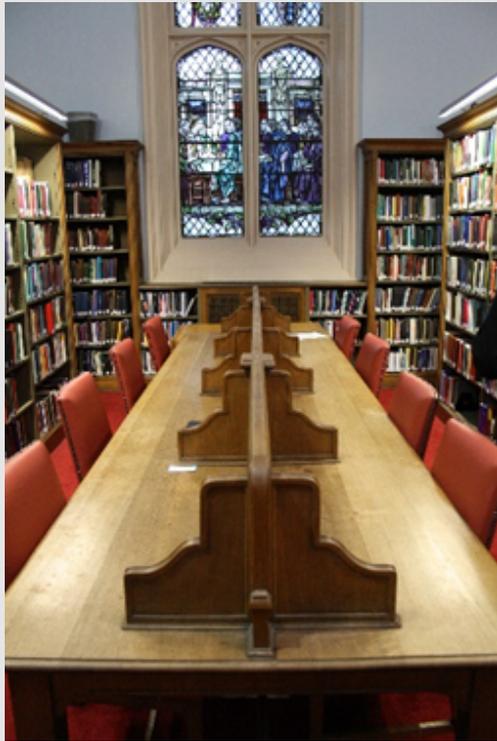
<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2865632>

QR codes for nature sounds and classical music, links to audiobooks, and information about the Student Wellbeing services the University offers. It is a great way to encourage students to take breaks and not let the stress of exams and final assessments affect their mental health. The students have been appreciative of the EdHelp team's efforts and have made use of the resources they have provided.

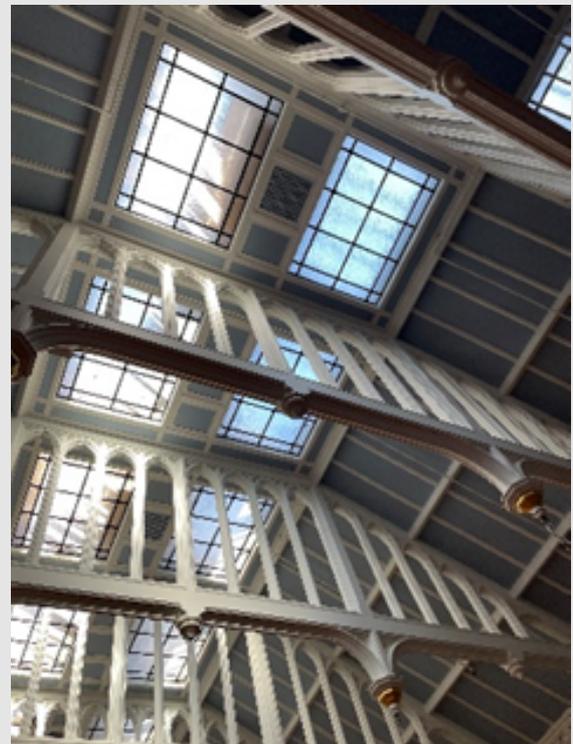
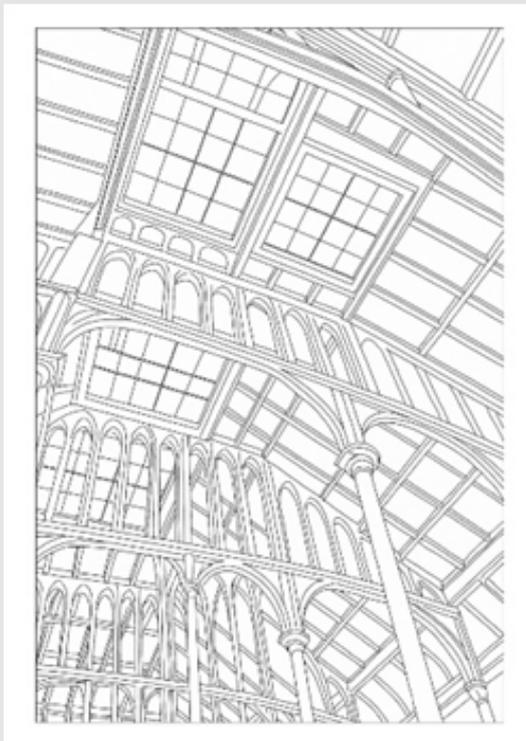
My contribution to the collection was some colouring sheets created from images of New College and the Library. The images were taken from familiar sights around the school and provide the students a creative outlet during the exam period. The colouring sheets were made using a combination of Adobe Photoshop and an online image generator. Our plan is to use the sheets in future engagement events, as they offer a great way for people of all ages to connect with our collections.



[Image 2] Stained-glass Window in New College Library Hall (Photo credit: Paul Dodds)



[Image 3] Inside New College Library Hall (Photo credit: Margaret Redpath)



[Image 4] New College Library Hall ceiling (Photo credit: Margaret Redpath)



[Image 5] New College Quad (Photo credit: Sam Ingram-Sills)

The Taylor Institution Library and St Giles' Fair

Daniel Drury

Librarian in Charge
Philosophy and Theology Faculties Library,
Bodleian, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK



Atla Annual 2025

Location: Omni William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Dates: 18th June - 21nd June 2025

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 meetings with vendors to support your library and research needs. It will be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and online, from 18th to 21st June 2025, as a hybrid event with multiple onsite & online options.

Please see more details at: <https://www.atla.com/eventshome/atla-annual/>

Dr Frank Yamada, the sixth executive director of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), will deliver the opening plenary. He brings to this role decades of leadership experience in theological education and in communities of faith. Yamada's plenary speech will focus on the future of theological education. He recognises that theological education is in the midst of a series of tectonic shifts in a time that has been called the Great Transition.

The full conference schedule, including the sessions, is published via <https://atlaannual2025.sched.com/info>.

The 53rd Annual Conference of BETH



Exploring AI's Role in European Theological Libraries

Location: Stavanger, Norway

Dates: 21-24 September 2025

BETH is delighted to announce the upcoming BETH Conference 2025, nestled against the breathtaking backdrop of Stavanger. With the Norwegian member association FTRB and VID Specialised University in Stavanger, BETH will explore AI's role in European theological libraries. Mark your calendar for September from 21st to 24th 2025.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought us new and unexpected opportunities across various fields. How can we use AI to improve our libraries and services while bearing in mind the potential downsides? We invite you to share your experience with us in Stavanger.

The full conference schedule, including the sessions, is published via:
<https://beth.eu/events/annual-conferences/53rd-2025-stavanger/>

ABTAPL Spring Conference 2026

Location: Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford, Oxford

Dates: 26th-28th March 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 2025, 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, and to share expertise and experience from external presenters from library and academic backgrounds. We also make sure there is plenty of time for 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 it brings.



The full conference schedule, including the sessions, is published via: <https://www.abtapl.org.uk/learning-and-development/future-learning-and-development/>