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Christianity and Libraries
A Selective Bibliography

Compiled by Gregory A. Smith, M.L.S.

At this late date in the world's history very few subjects of research can be entirely original. Even the newest experiment in science has been led up to, and the report on the new work usually gives a bibliography, which is but a pointer to previous findings.—Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff[1]

Introduction

Scholarly discourse is necessarily cumulative. Researchers do not operate in an intellectual vacuum, but execute a program of study that builds on records of previous inquiry. New ideas are generated in the context of old ideas that are accessible to the entire community. This observation is also true of professional discourse in fields such as library and information science (LIS).

Over the course of several decades, many thinkers have explored various connections between Christian faith and practice, on the one hand, and the world of libraries and information, on the other. This is not surprising since Christianity has had a foundational influence on Western culture and is a powerful presence in many regions of the world. However, it is intriguing to note that much research and reflection on the relationship between Christianity and libraries does not seem to build on prior discourse in the field. In fact, sources that can help us view LIS from a Christian perspective are largely invisible for various reasons. Many appeared as grey literature— dissertations, theses, unpublished conference papers, etc.—and never achieved wide circulation. Others were published in relatively obscure journals—publications that are held by few libraries and are slow to migrate toward electronic dissemination. Furthermore, many of these sources are not indexed in the standard bibliographic tools of LIS; as a result, locating the literature necessitates searches in numerous specialized databases.

I made an initial effort to enhance the visibility of this body of sources by publishing a bibliography of 147 entries in 2002.[2] Since then I have accumulated both recent and retrospective references, with the result that, as of March 2008, the total list consists of 340 entries.[3] The bibliography now resides in database form at CiteULike.org and will hopefully foster more interactive discourse on the relationship between Christianity and libraries.

Scope and Limitations

My original bibliography's organizing principle was "to direct readers to works that approach the theory and practice of librarianship *from a distinctively Christian perspective*." The scope of this bibliography is somewhat broader, including a range of sources that address the connections between Christian faith and the world of libraries and information. Not all are written from a Christian perspective; in fact, some reject any notion of biblical or ecclesiastical authority. Nevertheless, in my judgment, all contribute something to the development of a Christian understanding of libraries and librarianship. Among those that favor Christian principles, there is considerable diversity: Roman Catholicism, evangelicalism, Seventh-day Adventism, and mainline Protestantism are represented.

The scope includes sources about public, academic, and school libraries, as well as libraries in general. The bibliography provides particularly good coverage of libraries in Christian higher education, including theological education. Since libraries cannot help but reflect the contours of the publishing world, there are several entries relevant to religious publishing. When compiling my original bibliography I determined to exclude any sources related to church librarianship,[4] and I have maintained that editorial approach here.

Geographically, the bibliography's scope is

international, though most entries relate to libraries and librarianship in the United States or the United Kingdom. At present entries refer only to English-language sources. Date coverage extends from the 1940s to the present. Media types include journal articles, books, essays, conference presentations, dissertations, theses, pamphlets, Web resources, and more.

Nearly half of the entries in the bibliography come from one of the following serials:

- *American Theological Library Association: Summary of Proceedings*
- *The Catholic Library World*
- *Christian Librarian* [U.K.]
- *The Christian Librarian* [U.S.A.]
- *Journal of Religious & Theological Information*
- *Librarians' Christian Fellowship Newsletter* [now ceased]

Two other categories of sources account for a substantial portion of the overall bibliography:

- conference presentations, whether published or unpublished
- doctoral dissertations and master's theses or projects

Subject Matter

The bibliography covers a broad range of topics of interest to practitioners and scholars of LIS. Categories of subject tags assigned in the CiteULike environment include the following:

- types of libraries (e.g., *theological libraries*)
- types of librarians (e.g., *public librarians*)
- issues in librarianship (e.g., *change*)
- aspects of library work (e.g., *classification*)
- types of literature (e.g., *Christian fiction*)
- types of institutions (e.g., *Bible colleges*)
- religious and philosophical topics (e.g., *truth*)
- titles of works (e.g., *Christian Librarian [periodical]*)
- names of organizations (e.g., *American Library Association*)
- personal names—in direct order (e.g., *Thomas Bray*)

The most frequently assigned tags are as follows:

- academic libraries
- book selection
- Catholic libraries
- censorship
- Christian librarians
- Christian librarianship
- Christian libraries
- collection development
- intellectual freedom
- librarians
- libraries
- library ethics
- philosophy of librarianship
- public libraries
- school libraries
- theological education
- theological librarianship
- theological libraries
- values

Search Tips

Below are a few tips to help you get the most relevant results when searching the bibliography.

- The default Boolean operator is *OR*. Thus a search for *catholic periodicals* brings up all records containing either or both of the terms. Force the search engine to retrieve results containing a particular search term by placing a plus sign (*+*) before it: *+catholic +periodicals* retrieves records that contain both terms, though not necessarily as a phrase.
- Reduce the size of your search result set by using the *NOT* operator—coded by a minus sign (-). For example, to retrieve entries that include the word *Catholic* but don't contain the word *academic*, enter this string: *+catholic -academic*.
- Search for forms of a word by using the asterisk (*) truncation symbol. Thus a search for *catholic** retrieves sources containing the words *Catholic*, *Catholicism*, and *Catholics*.
- Search for an exact phrase by enclosing it in quotation marks (""). A search for *"collection management"* retrieves records containing that exact phrase.
- Enclose optional terms—those that you want

separated by the default *OR* operator—in parentheses in order to relate them to another term. Therefore, *+values +(fiction literature)* retrieves records that contain either *fiction* or *literature*, and also contain *values*.

- Combine any of the strategies just mentioned. The search string *+adventist* +(censor* "intellectual freedom")* retrieves any record containing a form of the word *adventist* that also contains either a form of the word *censor* or the exact phrase *intellectual freedom*.
- Limit your search to terms found in the title, journal, abstract, and tag fields. For example, *tag: bible* retrieves all records that have been assigned a tag containing the word *Bible*. There is no field limiter for author names.
- The search interface has certain limitations. For example, certain fields (e.g., editor names, titles of edited works) are not searchable. And while author names by themselves are searchable, they cannot be combined with other keywords to locate an author's contributions on a particular topic. Furthermore, the interface does not allow you to limit your search (by date, format, etc.) or sort your results (by date, author, etc.).

Browsing

The CiteULike interface allows you to browse bibliography entries in addition to searching them:

- By tag: To do this, click on the "Tag" link and choose one of the several hundred subject terms that appear in the cloud. The font size of the subject term indicates the extent to which it occurs in the bibliography. You can also initiate a tag browse by clicking on a subject term when you are viewing any record; doing so automatically retrieves a list of all bibliography entries that contain that subject.
- By author surname: To do this, click on the "Author" link and follow the procedure listed in the previous bullet. You can also retrieve a list of sources associated with an author or editor by clicking on a surname within any record.
- By recent entry: To do this, click on the "Recent" link and retrieve a list of the 50 entries most recently added to the bibliography.

The Future

I am well aware of the fact that there is much more literature waiting to be added to the bibliography. I have yet to complete my review of back volumes of two significant serials.[5] I also envision adding relevant sources published in a recent collection on theological librarianship,[6] at least one thematic journal issue,[7] and a few additional periodicals.[8] Furthermore, there is at least one other bibliography from which I might glean entries of particular interest.[9] Including non-English sources is a long-term possibility. And I welcome other researchers to suggest additions to the bibliography.

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[1] Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, 4th ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 21.
[2] Gregory A. Smith, "Selective Bibliography," in *Christian Librarianship: Essays on the Integration of Faith and Profession*, ed. Gregory A. Smith (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2002), 205-20.
[3] I gratefully acknowledge McFarland's permission to incorporate the entries from my 2002 bibliography into this cumulation.
[4] Church librarianship has several viable practitioner communities and is served by a body of literature that is fairly distinct from that comprehended in this bibliography.
[5] My listing of sources from *American Theological Library Association: Summary of Proceedings* is based purely on serendipitous discovery. In regards to *The Catholic Library World*, I have yet to comb through vols. 1-19, 26, and 29-49.
[6] Melody Layton McMahon and David R. Stewart, eds., *A Broadening Conversation: Classic Readings in Theological Librarianship* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006).
[7] At least nine articles pertaining to theological libraries appeared in *Theological Education* 40, no. 1 (2004).
[8] The three periodicals are *Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries Bulletin*, *Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association Newsletter*, and *FOCLIS Newsletter*.
[9] For example, Coralie E. J. Jenkin's *Theological Libraries and Librarianship: A Bibliography* (Adelaide, South Australia: Author, 1984).

Link to the bibliography: http://www.citeulike.org/search/user/christian_librarian