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The Role of the Library in the Character Formation of the Christian College Student

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The Role of the Library in the Character Formation of the Christian College Student

Gregory A. Smith

Library Director

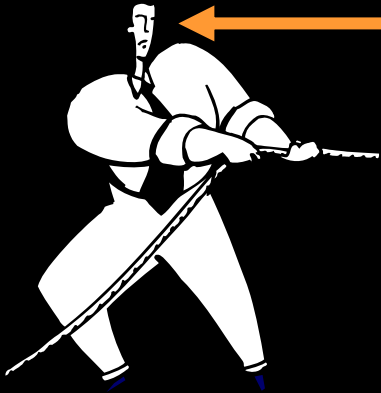
*Baptist Bible College and Graduate
School of Theology (Springfield, MO)*



A Professional Dilemma

A Professional Dilemma

Social
responsibility




Professional
neutrality



A Professional Dilemma

“A non-Christian librarian would not be concerned in this area, for secular library service is not concerned generally about the values contained in information, but is only concerned in the efficient delivery of information.”

Stanford Terhune, “The Impact of the Christian Faith on Library Service,” *The Christian Librarian* [U.S.A.] 26 (November 1982): 10.



*The Goal of Christian
Higher Education*

The Goal of Christian Higher Education



“I suggest that church-related colleges pay considerably more attention to the total growth of the student--intellectual, social, spiritual, even physical--and that the organization of the colleges reflect this focus on the total person of the student. . . .

The Goal of Christian Higher Education

I encourage the faculty to be much more involved in shaping, critiquing, and encouraging all features of the learning program so that the total development of the student is the major goal of the college.”

Arthur J. De Jong, *Reclaiming a Mission: New Direction for the Church-Related College* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 136.

The Goal of Christian Higher Education

Arthur F. Holmes's moral objectives for
Christian higher education:

- consciousness raising
- consciousness sensitizing
- values analysis
- values clarification
- values criticism

The Goal of Christian Higher Education

- moral imagination
- ethical analysis
- moral decision making
- moral responsibility
- virtue development
- moral identity

Arthur F. Holmes, *Shaping Character: Moral Education in the Christian College* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 6-8.



Moral Values in Libraries

Moral Values in Libraries

Libraries on Christian campuses can inculcate God-honoring values in at least four areas:

- the ethical use of information

The Ethical Use of Information

Stanford Terhune comments:

“The Christian librarian must . . . teach the student the ethical use of knowledge. The student must be taught that plagiarism is not ethical but rather a form of intellectual stealing. Students need to be taught the necessity of properly crediting the sources of their ideas.

The Ethical Use of Information

Christian students and faculty members are ethically responsible for obeying the copyright laws, and not trying to connive to get around them. Violation of copyright deprives the author of his rightful income from the sale of his writings.”

Stanford Terhune, “Impact of the Christian Faith,” 10.

The Ethical Use of Information

I have written elsewhere that “the Christian mind takes account of the moral implications of truth. Christians do not pursue knowledge in a vacuum. Rather, we seek to learn truth so that we can live in its light.”

Gregory A. Smith, “The Cultural Mandate, the Pursuit of Knowledge, and the Christian Librarian,” *Christian Librarian* [U.K.] 24 (2000): 53.

Moral Values in Libraries

Libraries on Christian campuses can inculcate God-honoring values in at least four areas:

- the ethical use of information
- respect for other members of the community

Respect for Other Members of the Community



Stanford Terhune comments:

“As in every area of the Christian college’s life, the student must be sensitive to the fact that he is part of a community, and that he must respect the rights of others. . . .

Respect for Other Members of the Community



A student who has little concern for maintaining a quiet study atmosphere . . . is not being considerate of others, but rather selfish.”

Stanford Terhune, “Impact of the Christian Faith,” 10.

Moral Values in Libraries

Libraries on Christian campuses can inculcate God-honoring values in at least four areas:

- the ethical use of information
- respect for other members of the community
- discipline in research

Discipline in Research

Gordon T. Smith comments:

“The mind is renewed by truth. Classrooms and libraries are ideal places in which to respond to the apostolic injunction that we take every thought captive for Christ. Spiritual formation, therefore, includes study. It is not just something that complements or accompanies study.

Discipline in Research

The discipline of study is an essential component of spiritual formation. Rigorous intellectual exercise is good for the soul. Few things are so redemptive as the honest exploration of truth.”

Gordon T. Smith, “Spiritual Formation in the Academy: A Unifying Model,” *Faculty Dialogue*, no. 26 (1996) [available at <<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/facdialogue/Issue26/Smith.html>>].

Discipline in Research

As I have written elsewhere, we “should promote the Christian world view through research and publication. . . . There is no better way for librarians to persuade students of the importance of Christian scholarship than for them to be involved in it.”

Gregory A. Smith, “A Philosophy of Christian Librarianship,” *The Christian Librarian* 43 (April 2000): 51.

Moral Values in Libraries

Libraries on Christian campuses can inculcate God-honoring values in at least four areas:

- the ethical use of information
- respect for other members of the community
- discipline in research
- **Christian morality in general**

Christian Morality in General

De Jong has observed that “the church-related college . . . should seek to gain a commitment from its students, as part of their Christian faith, to pursue ethical and moral behavior while they are students and when they enter adult society.”

Arthur J. De Jong, *Reclaiming a Mission*, 153.



*Means of
Inculcating Values*

Means of Inculcating Values

Christian librarians can contribute to students' moral development in several ways:

- providing resources that cultivate the moral life

Providing Resources that Cultivate the Moral Life

James R. Johnson comments:

“In choosing a Christian college, students have a right to expect to find resources both for Christian nurture and for education in the disciplines offered at the college. The discipline-related collection should adequately represent the disciplines and should also include materials reflecting a Christian perspective on those disciplines.

Providing Resources that Cultivate the Moral Life



The character of the nurture-related collection will be decidedly Christian. This does not mean that it will be narrow, but it does mean that it will be selected with a heavy Christian bias”

James R. Johnson, “A Christian Approach to Intellectual Freedom in Libraries,” *The Christian Librarian* [U.S.A.] 33 (May 1990): 67.

Means of Inculcating Values

Christian librarians can contribute to students' moral development in several ways:

- providing resources that cultivate the moral life
- instructing in the ethical use of information

Means of Inculcating Values

Christian librarians can contribute to students' moral development in several ways:

- providing resources that cultivate the moral life
- instructing in the ethical use of information
- setting a positive moral example

Setting a Positive Moral Example



What David Schroeder says of faculty-student relationships applies to library staff as well:
“Modeling Christlike character is certainly the most basic, the most important, and minimum activity a spiritual mentor can do.

Setting a Positive Moral Example



All faculty members in Christian colleges should be models of discipleship which students may admire.”

David E. Schroeder, “Faculty As Mentors: Some Leading Thoughts for Reevaluating Our Role As Christian Educators,” *Christian Education Journal* [U.S.A.] 13 (winter 1993): 36.

Means of Inculcating Values

Christian librarians can contribute to students' moral development in several ways:

- confronting and counseling offenders

Confronting and Counseling Offenders

Stanford Terhune advocates confrontation when students exhibit a lack of concern for the welfare of other library users: “The Christian librarian must lovingly but strongly confront this type of student, so that the student can recognize his sin and repent of it.”

Stanford Terhune, “Impact of the Christian Faith,” 10.

Means of Inculcating Values

Christian librarians can contribute to students' moral development in several ways:

- confronting and counseling offenders
- praying for and with patrons

Conclusion



In 1954 Raymond P. Morris observed:

“All of this is to say, as I see it, that our jobs are carried on in the context of life, in the context of living things, primarily with persons, not inanimate objects. We are dealing with people in a very vital way.

Conclusion



We are dealing with growth in understanding, with the shaping of points of view, with developing and living philosophies, with the stuff which shall shape the promptings of conscience and ethical and moral perception.

Conclusion



We are dealing with situations which will fortify the will, which will shape character, and which will ultimately participate in the destiny of men.”

Raymond P. Morris, “Theological Librarianship as a Ministry,”
American Theological Library Association: Summary of Proceedings
7 (1953): 36.