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Jam To-morrow and Jam Yesterday, but Never Jam To-day: The of Theology Libraries Planning the Twenty-first Century

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ABSTRACT: The future of theology libraries is far from clear. Since the nineteenth century, theology libraries have evolved to support the work of theological education. This article briefly reviews the development of theology libraries in North America and examines the contextual changes impacting theology libraries today. Three significant factors that will shape theology libraries in the coming decade are collaborative models of pedagogy and scholarship, globalization and rapid changes in information technology, and changes in the nature of scholarly publishing including the digitization of information. A large body of research is available to assist those responsible for guiding the direction of theology libraries in the next decade, but there are significant gaps in what we know about the impact of technology on how people use information that must be filled in order to provide a solid foundation for planning.

Has anyone done work on the relationship between the Internet resources and the need for and use of books these days? I know that faculty and the kind of assignments they give, for example, are involved in this puzzle. The use of our library by students has decreased the past few years and we are trying to sort out what may be the cause and if we are dealing with a trend toward more Internet resources/courses and its effect on fewer books being read and taken out.(David MacLachlan)

Introduction

Since F. W. Lancaster predicted the “inevitability” of an all-electronic system of scholarly communication in 1978, almost every group concerned about the future of higher education has voiced MacLachlan’s question in one form or another. Trustees want to know whether to allocate funds for new library construction. Faculties lament the increased reliance on Internet sources by students (and resulting decline in the quality of research) but celebrate the ease of such tools for their own research and scholarly communication. Administrators attempting to allocate appropriate library funding wonder whether any of
the high costs of a technological infrastructure can be offset by reductions in those of maintaining a physical infrastructure and physical collections for the library or if they must always be additional. All the while, the expectations of students, faculties, and accrediting agencies assume the presence and integration of information technologies into the library. Inevitably librarians struggling to make sense of the rapid changes in their own profession are often asked to foresee the future. At root, the question everyone asks is “what is the future of the library?” The question is not simply one of technology, though trying to disentangle the technological issues seems as fruitless as separating the wheat from the tares.

Arnold Hirshon, formerly vice provost for information resources at Lehigh University and now executive director of the New England Library Network, described the challenge of trying to determine where we are amidst this chaos as being like Alice’s journey Through the Looking Glass.

The White Queen explains the rule is “jam tomorrow, jam yesterday, but never jam today.” Of course to Alice this makes no sense. If there will be jam tomorrow, and if tomorrow’s yesterday is today, then surely there will be jam today. So Alice objects that “It must come sometimes to ‘jam to-day,’” but the Queen replies “No, it can’t. It’s jam every other day: to-day isn’t any other day, you know.”

Indeed, today isn’t any other day. Ever-growing library budgets and the dominance of the print medium easily controlled by librarians and understood by users are the characteristics of “yesterday’s jam.” We hope for new electronic information systems that enhance teaching and research, while ensuring sustainable models of scholarly publishing, but those are some of the ingredients we hope will be in “tomorrow’s jam.” Meanwhile faculties, administrators, trustees, and librarians are faced with uncertainty about budget allocation, emerging technologies, construction of physical and technological infrastructures, not to mention questions about the pedagogical issues emerging from electronic technologies. Where’s the “jam” today?

I will not attempt to review here the considerable literature that academic librarians have produced in the past twenty-five years attempting to envision the library of the future. Rather, I will attempt to identify a variety of issues that provide a context for decisions about the future of theology libraries. I will also attempt to project a research agenda that may guide librarians and their parent institutions in making wise decisions for the future of theology libraries. Finally, I will propose my own vision for the future of theology libraries, though placing it in print might imply that I see it with more clarity than I generally do.
The changing context of theology libraries

Thomas S. Kuhn's notion of a paradigm shift has been interpreted broadly as a model for describing change and applied not only to scientific thinking, but also to many social phenomena including the rapid changes taking place in libraries. Charles Lowry claims "the paradigm shift is found in the organization and delivery of information ...—not in libraries." Regardless of what is shifting and where, it is clear that few feel in control of the process. Rapid changes in information technology are certainly a factor in the changes taking place in libraries, though not the only factor. Changes in curricula and models of pedagogy have a tremendous impact on theology libraries as well.

Lowry suggests the changes taking place in libraries today should be seen in view of the changes that took place in the middle of the nineteenth century. Libraries as we know them today began to take shape in response to an earlier information revolution that was spawned by the industrial revolution. Until that time, libraries had been little more than repositories or archives. Few services were offered and fewer standards existed. Libraries had essentially remained unchanged since the invention of the printing press.

By today's standards the collections of early nineteenth century theology libraries were meager. The paucity and high cost of theological books made building a collection very difficult. Kansfield suggests this is largely because of the immigrant nature of the American church. Ministers leaving Europe "took with them only those books judged most necessary to their pastoral task." In addition, North American presses were publishing only a limited number of theological works, primarily "sermons, polemic works of theological controversy or biographies of famous churchmen."

Libraries were valued, but attracting a strong faculty was often considered a higher priority than acquiring books or collections. Timothy Dwight, in the inaugural sermon for Andover Theological Seminary, refers to the library before making any mention of the faculty, but clearly gives more emphasis to the latter. Even those schools that already held strong collections frequently had library practices and procedures that supported "the purely lecture-based curriculum of an older scholastic tradition." In describing the library at Andover Theology Seminary prior to 1837, for example, Kansfield describes very limited hours of access and circulation. The hours specified for loaning books to students were from two to four o'clock on Saturday afternoons. No more than three books could be loaned to a student at any one time. The library's collection was clearly valued, but its role in theological education could hardly be seen as primary or dynamic.

Changes in higher education in the nineteenth century resulted in academic libraries being identified as the "heart of the university." First used by Harvard University President Charles William Eliot, who served from 1869 to 1909, the phrase gained popularity as a way to recognize the importance of the
library to the educational enterprise. Harvard had already adopted the “uni­versity” ideal, but “Johns Hopkins University, founded in 1873, was the first to follow the German university model.” It stressed research and the provision of “a center of concentration, the association of other scholars, research mate­rials, laboratories, and a means of publishing. Scholarship rather than teaching became the vital core of the new profession.” The emergence of the German system of doctoral education increased demand for a new type of scholarly literature, and the invention of linotype in the 1880s made large-scale produc­tion and distribution of scholarly books and journals possible.

Responding to changing models of education and a vastly more efficient publishing industry, academic libraries began to evolve to address the new requirements. By 1910, academic libraries had emerged much as we have known them until the present. Standards for cataloging, classification, and indexing emerged. Public services such as reference and circulation had developed. Collaborative interlibrary loan agreements were instituted. Librar­ians developed policies and procedures to handle the increased volume of scholarly literature being published and to facilitate the delivery of scholarly information to support the pedagogical and research needs of the new model of higher education.

Not surprisingly, theological educators in North America began to be attracted to this model of education. Niebuhr, Williams, and Gustafson assert the “development of theological education in modern times has much in common with the educational movement in democracy in general.” In The Advancement of Theological Education, they proposed “theological studies should develop in close relationship to the mediating disciplines in the sciences and humanities.” Library collections that could support theological inquiry in the context of a broader secular learning would need to be developed. How rapidly the changes they called for were implemented is debatable. It is clear, however, that the social sciences in particular have influenced the curricula of seminary education. Models of pedagogy began to shift from a traditional scholastic model of primary engagement with the professor to models that encouraged engagement with the literatures of theology and related disciplines. Library research came to be an expected part of the seminary experience. Librarians were encouraged to build collections that focused on theological research, not only the classroom teaching of the faculty.

This shift in theological education to a focus on engagement with a broad range of literature had a tremendous impact on theology libraries. Acquisi­tion budgets were increased, at least for a time. Buildings were constructed. The instructional role of librarians was emphasized, however with less clarity than would be helpful. As it gradually emerged in the standards for assessment in the accreditation process of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, the library was to be a partner in curriculum development. The library was to fulfill:
... its teaching responsibilities by meeting the bibliographic needs of the library's patrons, offering appropriate reference services, providing assistance in using information technology, teaching theological bibliography and research methods that foster knowledge of the literature and enable students to locate resources, incorporating library research throughout the curriculum, and helping to serve the information needs of graduates, clergy, and the church.¹⁹

Unlike the focus on collections and buildings, however, there is far less data to support the changes in the instructional role of librarians. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, even now, theological librarians rarely share equal footing with faculty in curriculum development and are often limited to bibliographic instruction opportunities that are marginalized within the curriculum. A session at the 2004 American Theological Library Association Annual Meeting on faculty status for librarians along with related listserv discussions draw attention to a perception held by many librarians that they have little voice in issues about the theological curriculum and teaching that takes place in their institutions.

Theology libraries gained recognition as being essential to theological education. The popular metaphor, "heart of the university,"²⁰ was readily adapted by theological educators to describe the importance of their libraries to theological education, even where there was reluctance to provide adequate financial support required for a strong and steady heartbeat. Niebuhr, Williams, and Gustafson use the fact that schools "state in their catalogues that the library is the center of the academic life"²¹ to call seminaries to provide adequate support for library facilities and staffing. Though imprecise, the "heart" metaphor does strongly imply a primacy for the library in the curriculum and the enterprise of theological education.

It should not surprise us, then, that in the midst of our own information revolution, we find theology libraries evolving again. To assume that the issues being raised are merely technological is to miss the point. Absent from such a response is attention to what Mark Hansen calls the "exocultural" dimension of technologies. "More fundamental than all the intentional, explicit—dare I say cultural?—uses we make of our technologies are the largely unmarked alterations they operate on our basic perceptual and subperceptual experiential faculties."²² Our world is certainly changed by technology, but the way we perceive and experience the world is changed also. "Not only do computers and electronic media bid to shake up the forms, social practices, and educational bases of writing and reading, they also provide powerful and appealing new metaphors for knowledge and communication, often replacing those of the book."²³

For centuries, "reading" and the "book" have provided metaphors for our perception of the world. We speak of "reading" a situation or another person like "an open book." At a life transition, we speak of starting another "chapter"
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in our lives or sometimes “turning over a new leaf.” As people of faith, we find commonality with Jews and Muslims in that we are all “people of the book.” Today, however, we are more likely to turn to metaphors born out of computer and Internet technologies. “Linking,” “interfacing,” and “downloading” have all come to represent ways we think about information. “Networking” refers not just to the connection of computers, but also to social interaction. “Googling” describes our efforts to discover new information, and so on.

Some argue that it is more than our metaphors that have changed. In his nostalgic eulogy to the book, Sven Birkerts argues that books have functioned as the building blocks of our intellectual history. The book:

... spatializes knowledge, puts a roof over its head, as it were. And the reflex of the reader is to project attributes upon it. The material substance of a book represents the claim it will make upon our time and attention. Its three-dimensionality testifies to the palpability of its subject, the merit of its claims. . . . It establishes the material status of a thought.24

Less provocatively, Eyal Amiran suggests the electronic text in fact alters our perception of time, knowledge, and the way we organize information. The periodical, he argues, produces:

a particular model of order, that of serial succession. The series is one of the most pervasive of Western metaphysical orders. With family trees, the hours and the days, houses of the sun, and apostolic generations, Western culture has organized time and phenomena in succession. Serials extend this vocabulary. In serials, issues are numbered and appear in volumes—in this they replicate the library itself. . . . And the uniformity of articles and features produces the idea that valuable information is ordered; its greatest information is order itself. So the function of serials is not only to determine what counts, but also to count.25

The electronic text, Amiran claims, has no material substance. “It is disembodied and exists outside of time.”26 Its abstract quality affects not only how we perceive the content itself, but how we organize, order, and control it. Naturally, those are significant issues for librarians. Freed of the constraints of printed pages bound together, no technical reason prevents the creation of an index for example, that might allow searching across hundreds or thousands of what we have traditionally considered individual volumes. Without the physical definition of pages and bindings, how do we conceive such a full-text database? Likewise, no technical reason prohibits the easy creation of what we might think of as a derivative textbook that might contain chapters, essays or articles or even smaller excerpts from multiple sources. Does such a creation constitute a new book?

Certainly the altered “seriality” and “spatiality” of information influence how librarians organize it. Much of current cataloging practice assumes the
Jack W. Ammerman
cataloger is describing what she has "in hand." When one can't physically hold
an item, such as an electronic file, those assumptions are quickly called into
question—and these are not the only issues that confront librarians. The radical
changes in scholarly publishing simply can't be ignored. Virtually every
library in the past decade has been flooded with vast quantities of information
in media that emerge at rates never before encountered from publication
streams that until recently didn't exist. Even the Library of Congress has been
forced to wrestle with the overwhelming changes in the volume and format of
materials it collects. Once known as stable predictable storehouses of the
printed word, libraries have been anything but in the early years of the digital
revolution. "The intellectual function of libraries—to acquire, arrange, and
make accessible the creative work of humankind—is being transformed by the
explosion in the production and dissemination of information in digital form,
especially over global networks."27

Reflecting on the transition that took place with the invention of the
"codex," James J. O'Donnell indicates that the survival rate for works not
copied into codex form was very small. "If you were a very farsighted text of
the second century and you wanted to be read a thousand or more years later,
the thing you most wanted was to be copied into a codex format."28 He goes on
to suggest that the current time may be a transition not unlike that which took
place with the invention of the codex. "Put another way, too much attention to
preservation of the printed book may have the perverse effect of undermining
prospects of future readership if materials fail to be digitized.29 Whether or not
that is the case, he rightly points to the radical changes resulting from the
changes in publishing.

The vital difference between present and future practices will be that the
forms of organization of knowledge in electronic media do not resemble those
of the traditional codex book. The methods of production and distribution will
diverge from those of the print media even more. Where the library has
traditionally been one of a few such enterprises cooperating (if sometimes at
arm's length) with a finite community of publishers (and thus both together
functioning as gatekeepers on a limited set of narrow information pathways
from authors to readers), a community is now growing in which there will be
as many publishers as readers.30

The transformation in publishing that has taken place in the last decade
does not only the way we access information, but also the way it can be used,
and ultimately the business model that makes its publication possible. Scholars
continue to discover new ways to search, manipulate, and utilize information
in digital formats. Yet, the business models that have served traditional print-
only publications frequently limit access to such information in digital format.
Referring to scholarly publishing in the scientific community, Michael Eisen
asserts that the "potential we all dream about will remain largely unrealized as
long as the scientific community persists in distributing information and
supporting that distribution, using practices that were developed for the print age and then just grafted wholesale onto the electronic age.” 31 Recognizing the critical role of scholarly journals, Eisen suggests that the practice of allowing the journal publishers to “own” and control scholarly literature makes no moral sense in the electronic publishing environment. “It completely thwarts the best interests and goals of almost every stakeholder involved in the process other than the publisher.”32 Suggesting that the practice of charging an access fee for each copy only made sense in a print world where the cost of production and distribution were the primary costs of publication, Eisen and others are developing an “open access” model for scholarly communication. The cost of publication (electronic) is paid at the front-end, allowing free and open access to the information after publication.

While this new open access model of scholarly publication is emerging first in the scholarly communities of science, medicine and technology, it will undoubtedly affect models of scholarly publication in other disciplines as well. Whether the business model adopted by open access publishers is workable in the humanities remains to be seen. It could reduce the rapidly rising cost of subscriptions libraries pay for scholarly journals. (The cost of journals in the disciplines of philosophy and religion increased 40 percent between 2000 and 2004.33) Ultimately, the “first copy” cost to publish an article doesn’t go away, though.

Electronic publication models also hold the potential for radically changing the way libraries acquire and make such information accessible. If libraries can no longer rely on traditional channels of publication to assist in identifying recently published material, how do they do so? What should they collect? From whom should they collect? The problem of collection development becomes enormous.

What would be the contents of the electronic virtual library? Everything? Every what? Just to ask the question makes it suddenly obvious that one of the most valuable functions in the traditional library has been not its inclusivity, but its exclusivity, its discerning judgment that keeps out as many things as it keeps in. We have grown up assuming that information is a scarce resource and devised our economics accordingly; but in an information waterfall, the virtual library that tells us everything and sweeps us off our feet with a cataract of data will not be highly prized. The librarian will have to be a more active participant in staving off “infochaos.”34

Of course this is not a new problem to librarians. The scarcity of publications published in the so-called “Third World” in theology libraries rarely results from conscious decision. These publications simply remain unknown to theological librarians. Identifying the literatures of peoples in the non-western world has always been a major problem. Adding the multitude of materials published electronically in non-traditional publishing channels only increases the amount of what librarians call “grey literature.”
O'Donnell and Eisen are signaling the need for a not so subtle shift for librarians. Library users increasingly require assistance in determining what information not to look at. Producers of "print, film, magnetic, and optical storage media produced about five exabytes of new information in 2002," much of that stored on hard disks. Five exabytes is equivalent in size to the amount of information contained in 37,000 new libraries the size of the Library of Congress book collections. Admittedly, only a percentage of this is theological in nature, but the users of theology libraries live in a culture in which they are bombarded by this magnitude of information daily. The need for tools of discernment will surely increase.

What we know and what we don't know

Fortunately, theology libraries can benefit from the significant research that has been done by librarians in major research libraries during the past decade. While not always strictly applicable to the theological setting, much of what has been discovered can at least identify core issues that need to be addressed, if not provide specific guidance for planning and making decisions about theology libraries.

A common theme emerges from much of this research. The focus of the work of the library must be on the user. Clearly this is implied in O'Donnell's suggestion that the librarian "will need to be a more active participant in staving off 'infochaos.'" Even in considering the design of library buildings, for example, Richard J. Bazillion defines a building's efficiency in terms of its ability to make the user efficient. Mary Ann Bates, an information professional, claims "the way to build loyal clients is to offer a streamlined and frictionless interface, coming to the client rather than expecting the client to accommodate the info pro's special needs or requirements."

Insisting this does not go far enough, Debora J. Grimes's excellent study of the "centrality" of the academic library attempted to test the "library is the heart of the institution" metaphor using organizational theory's understanding of centrality. From the data gathered in her study, indicators of a library's centrality emerged, falling into three categories: service, access, and tradition. Grimes asserts that the theme or concept that ties all of these indicators together is the user, but again, even this may be too broad.

What we really need to know is what about the user links these three concepts in a way that informs our theory and practice. When the categories are considered further, it is possible to see that it is the success of the user that speaks to centrality [emphasis added]; it is the success of the user (whether faculty, student, researcher, or administrator) that is affected by the service, access and tradition of an academic library.

User satisfaction is only one of several factors in this "highly focused concept that requires a deep understanding of the information and service
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needs of students, researchers, and other significant library users.” Most theology librarians will argue that we have always focused on users. We may not, however, have the deep understanding of the users’ information and service needs and how drastically they have changed that Grimes insists we must have.

Traditional ways of categorizing library users are not always helpful. Christensen and Raynor describe market researchers’ efforts to help a fast-food chain determine how to increase the sales of milkshakes. A traditional market segmentation approach that identified different types of customers resulted in no significant change in the volume of sales. “A new set of researchers then came in to understand what customers were trying to get done for themselves when they ‘hired’ a milkshake, and this approach helped the chain’s managers see things that traditional market research had missed.” The most interesting finding was that most of the milkshakes sold were sold in the early morning.

They discovered that:

most of these morning milkshake customers had hired it [the milkshake] to achieve a similar set of outcomes. They faced a long, boring commute and needed something to make the commute more interesting! They were “multitasking”—they weren’t yet hungry, but knew that if they did not eat something now, they would get hungry by 10:00. They also faced constraints. They were in a hurry, were often wearing their work clothes, and at most had only one free hand.

Other products such as bagels, biscuits, and donuts were messy, greasy, and sticky. The “job performance” of these products was simply not as good as the shake. In addition, the researchers discovered that these same customers found the shake less satisfactory in the afternoon when they brought their children to the restaurant for a fast treat. The shake simply took too long for the children to drink. The parents got bored waiting on their children to finish, or simply ran out of time to wait.

David B. Liroff, vice president and chief technology officer for Boston’s public broadcasting station, WGBH, suggests that we should think of information as a product, specifically a product that the user “hires” to do a particular job. Understanding the job a person is hiring the information to do is essential to providing the information and service required in order to make that person successful. Few students (or even faculty) come to the library to develop strong library research skills. They come seeking information with a specific task in mind, whether it is a paper to write, a sermon to preach, or a lecture to prepare.

But what if theology librarians don’t actually have the deep understanding of the information needs of library users that we need? We do indeed know some things about how our libraries are changing, though even that knowledge is incomplete and uncertain. Denise A. Troll claims, “we know almost nothing about why libraries are changing because our traditional data collection practices tend to be myopic, counting selected activities within our
purview and relying on anecdotal evidence about the larger context in which we operate as a basis for interpreting our data."  

Traditional measures used by theology libraries try to quantify the raw materials, or potential (inputs) we use to serve the needs of our users and the extent to which users avail themselves of the libraries collections and services (outputs). Annual library reports generally focus on collection size, acquisitions budget and the number of circulation, interlibrary loan, and reference transactions. Gate-count is occasionally included as well. Input and output measures for a digital environment are far from standard when they exist at all. For the most part, we have no standardized comparable data, either within an institution or across institutions, to assist us in assessing library trends in a digital information environment.

What we need to know

I began with and want to return to David MacLachlan’s question, “Has anyone done work on the relationship between the Internet resources and the need for and use of books these days?” Fortunately the answer is yes. A number of educators have indeed been working on this very issue, though it is largely focused on academic libraries associated with major universities. What academic librarians have discovered provides a solid foundation for theological educators to build upon, though it will clearly need to be adapted to address the unique needs of theological education. The first steps of any such effort are to determine what is known and what remains to be known.

Models of theological education in North America have changed several times since the seventeenth century in response to both the church and the academy. Theology libraries have always played a supporting role to the institutions of which they are a part, primarily mirroring the communities they served. Kansfield’s study clearly demonstrates the primary role of the faculty, librarians, and administrators of theology schools in defining the collections and services provided by their libraries.

With changes in the role of ministers in today’s culture, new models for pedagogy in higher education, and a growing awareness of the global context of not only theological education but all that we do, shifts in the notion of “what makes for good theological education” are not surprising. Nor should we be surprised to discover that theology libraries are changing to address these emerging needs. In this case, however, I believe there are two additional factors that appear to play a large role in shaping theology libraries.

First, recent educational theory has emphasized the shift from the passive role students once played as they listened to lectures. “Collaborative learning” and “teaching and learning” are only two of the recent catch phrases used to describe a style of learning in which the professor and the students are engaged as partners in the teaching and learning process. With such changes in peda-
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gogical models, one would expect to discover that students are much more active in identifying the kinds of resources and services they want and expect from theology libraries. Few students are limited to the resources of a single library, and increasingly, they have access to resources available through Internet access. They bring expectations shaped by their experience in the classroom and by their experience in the broader culture. Likewise, it is not surprising to discover that reading is only one of several means of learning in the learning toolkit of most students. Students will play a much larger role in shaping the future of theology libraries.

Second, it would be naïve to suppose that technology is something new in libraries, and therefore poses an unfamiliar threat. Still, the role technology is playing in determining the shape of a library has never been so great. Hence, to ignore the impact of information technology on theology libraries would also be naïve. Christensen’s distinction between “sustaining technologies” and “disruptive technologies” is intriguing. A sustaining technology, according to Christensen, enables the continued improvement or enhancement of existing products that are targeted toward one’s current customer or user base. With good management, corporations (or theology libraries in this case) are usually able to incorporate “sustaining technologies” into the goods and services they deliver. They listen to their customers, and they utilize the expertise and capabilities of the corporation (library) to develop and improve marketable products and services.

Despite good management, however, “disruptive technologies” are very difficult for established corporations (libraries) to incorporate. Disruptive technologies are those that make possible a completely new product or service. These new products or services are generally not as good as existing products and services initially and are, consequently, not of great interest to one’s current customer or user base, at least initially. Disruptive technologies improve at such a rapid rate, though, that the products and services based upon them quickly outpace products and services based on older (sustaining) technologies. Note that disruptive technologies are disruptive only to existing companies and organizations that rely on traditional technologies. Startup companies readily adopt these new technologies as the foundation for their products and services. Customers are less concerned about the technology than they are in getting their tasks done with as little cost as possible.

Google (and other Internet search engines) may represent a disruptive technology for libraries. Many undergraduates, like Heidi Carlson, clearly prefer Internet searching to the use of traditional library resources. “I go to the library once or twice a week to study,” she said. “If I’m doing research, I sit at home and get on my computer. I go to Google.” Librarians claim that Internet search engines are simply not “good enough” to replace the catalogs and indexes they maintain, but Internet search engines continue to improve rapidly and students who have been traditional users of the library are flocking to them, finding them “good enough” for what they want to do.
Space does not permit a full exploration of disruptive technologies for libraries. Whether Internet search engines really will become a disruptive technology for libraries remains to be seen. Those planning for the future of theological libraries should recognize that technology plays a major role in shaping our culture and theology libraries are not sheltered from its impact, but the issue is far more complex than simply determining how libraries will pay for it. Some technologies that are emerging may so radically change the way people discover and use information that the roles of libraries will be radically altered.

Confronted with changes in scholarly publishing, in pedagogical models, in information technology, and in the expectations of their users, libraries are changing. Wendy Pradt Lougee suggests that even the library as place is changing. The traditional model of a single centrally located facility that houses all of the collections and services of the library is, in many cases, being replaced with a more diffuse model. “Once the physical centerpiece of a campus with large, central collections, library resources are now more distributed and library users more nomadic.”

Grimes offers a helpful metaphor. Speaking of the academic library in a university setting, Grimes suggests replacing “heart of the university” with “Crossroads Community:”

The crossroads community is a valuable way to consider the role of the academic library in the American university. The academic library is a scholarly community crossroads, affected by and affecting its environment, its technology, and its users. Just as a crossroads connects people to other places and other resources, the academic library connects students and faculty to other institutions and information sources.

Discovering what we need to know

Two decades ago, Theological Libraries for the Twenty-first Century: Project 2000 Final Report was published as a supplement in Theological Education. Project 2000 identified four essential roles that it envisioned theology libraries would play:

• Seminary libraries represent the historical breadth of theological thought and religious practice for the benefit of contemporary scholarship and education for ministry.
• Libraries preserve the intellectual diversity, both past and present, of theology.
• Libraries support the instructional curriculum.
• Libraries nurture research and fresh understanding of religious thought and practice.

The report predicted these roles would remain unchanged for the foreseeable future, yet these roles are stated so broadly that they offer little help in
understanding how theology libraries are likely to change in the next twenty years. Funding sources, physical and technological infrastructures, staffing patterns, and of course the nature of the very materials we collect (if "collecting" is even an appropriate term) will surely look very different in the next two decades.

Written at the advent of the use of computers in libraries, Project 2000's research methodology utilized traditional measures that are now wholly inadequate to provide the information required for planning in a digital environment. It relied primarily on traditional library input measures as provided by librarians rather than seeking to learn from library users what information related tasks they are trying to do and how they are trying to do them. Our data gathering practices have not changed significantly since then. There are too many gaps in what we know and the data we gather to allow adequate planning for the future of theology libraries. It is time to revisit Project 2000.

The landscape we find ourselves in requires that we:

- Articulate the pedagogical models used in our institutions.
- Clarify the role of the theology library in support of the educational goals of the institution.
- Develop means for gathering comparable data that can help in assessing user needs for resources and services in a digital environment.
- Discern the nature and impact of emerging technologies.
- Develop effective feedback mechanisms to allow librarians to continually discover the information needs of the users they serve.
- Develop collaborative relationships with all the stakeholders in the enterprise of theological education.

Looking to the future

Proposing a vision for the future of theology libraries seems rather audacious after claiming that we don't yet know enough to make informed decisions, but I'm continually pressed by my own faculty and administration to do just that. Usually, they want to know about buildings, library collections, and the future of print materials. Normally, they are concerned about the financial implications as well. In the hope that articulating this vision—in spite of its gaps and fuzziness—will invite a dialogue through which it can be tested, I propose to briefly address three issues: function (service), collections, and space (building). It is easiest to do so in the context of the factors that drive the vision: collaborative models of pedagogy and scholarship, globalization and technology, and changes in scholarly publication and the digitization of information.
Collaborative models of scholarship and pedagogy

Though there are problems with Grimes' "crossroads" metaphor, its strength lies in its focus on building collaborative relationships. As attractive as the image of the solitary scholar in her or his study may be in the midst of interruptions we all endure, the reality is that the work of the scholar and teacher is far more collaborative than that image would suggest. As collaborative models of scholarship and pedagogy continue to emerge, theology libraries will evolve to become places of increased collaboration. The physical structure and technological infrastructure of libraries will invite and facilitate ongoing collaborative conversations among scholars, between teachers and students, and among students. Certainly networks make possible dissemination of information in profoundly more efficient ways, but the potential for collaboration among scholars, librarians, teachers, and students holds the potential to transform the scholarly enterprise. Library buildings will provide space for group study, informal conversation, and instruction as well as private study. Faculty may hold office hours in offices in or adjacent to the library so that the faculty member can guide students to a resource in the library stacks or accessible from the library's network. Librarians will work collaboratively with students to assist them in accomplishing their tasks more efficiently and effectively. These collaborations may take place in the library building, but they may also utilize the technological infrastructure to engage in electronically mediated collaboration. The effectiveness of this collaboration might be measured by an increase in the quality of student assignments or an increase in the amount of time students have for their own family life and spiritual development. The effectiveness of collaboration with faculty might be measured by an increase in the number of junior faculty receiving tenure.

Networks of collaboration will extend beyond the campus. Theology libraries will collaborate with other libraries and sources of information to provide access to a vast array of resources that could never be physically housed on a single campus. Collection development will shift focus from acquisition to access. Libraries will also collaborate to preserve and make information easily discovered and used.

Admittedly, these predictions sound a little utopian, and that assumes that collaborative scholarship and teaching are self-evidently good and desirable. Adopting such models of pedagogy will radically alter the culture of those institutions, and simply adopting a collaborative model of teaching doesn't guarantee the library will change. Only with intentionality and the right kind of leadership will libraries evolve to become integral to such collaboration.

Globalization and technology

For much of the past twenty years, theological educators have explored and actively sought the globalization of theological education. Theological Education has published many articles on this line including several thematic
issues in the late 1980s. Globalization, especially as it is made possible by technology, is a powerful force that does and will continue to shape theology libraries. The communities they serve play a large role in shaping the collections and services provided by any library. In a global context, the nature of that community naturally becomes more diverse and expansive. International scholars and students as well as simple access to the library's catalog and web pages by users around the globe all make it more difficult to draw geographic boundaries to define the community the library serves. Certainly theology libraries will continue to serve local communities, but even those local communities will grow more complex.

At a very basic level, the nature of library collections will change as librarians acquire materials published in "non-western" parts of the world. The collections in many libraries are shaped largely by western concepts of the nature of theology and religion, and even at a more basic level, the concepts of what constitutes "authentic" scholarship. Globalization will certainly expand the geographic regions (and languages) from which libraries collect, but it is also likely to change the types of materials we consider including in the collection. Previously unrepresented voices will emerge as part of the dialogue embodied in the collections of theology libraries.

Some theology libraries may choose to define the communities to which service is provided less geographically. Technology already exists to allow the provision of reference, information discovery, and document delivery services to remote users. Often packaged to support distance education, nothing would prevent such technologies being used for a globally dispersed library "community."

Changes in scholarly publication and the digitization of information

I've already described at some length the radical changes taking place in scholarly publication, some of which is beginning to appear in "digital only" or "digital first" formats. Sensing the Library's "vulnerability and uncertainty at the dawn of the information age," the Librarian of Congress commissioned a study to develop a strategic plan concerning the path the Library of Congress should follow in the coming decade concerning information technology. In spite of the remarkably innovative work libraries have done in the past decade with the many new forms of information, the report recognizes that "no clear new paradigm has emerged even as the old one is shaken." Most libraries have well developed collection development policies that cover print media. The report suggests that similar policy statements need to be developed for digital content. Including digital content in a library's collection development policies allows it to be integrated into the overall planning, resource allocation, and services of the library in a way that treating it as a special project never will.

While few theology libraries will ever have the resources to mount major efforts for creating digital content from their local print collections, they will
increasingly encounter content in a wide variety of digital media. "No one institution, not even the Library of Congress, can hope to collect all or even a majority of all digital content. Thus, cooperative arrangements for distributed collections are not merely an option to consider but are essential" to the future of theology libraries.

Building distributed collections will alter the way one measures a library's performance. Annual reports and self-studies for accreditation frequently focus on inputs (the number of volumes in a collection, the number of circulation and reference transactions). Distributed collections make such performance measures more difficult to gather and to interpret. They may prompt libraries to recognize that if the library is focused on the success of its users, measuring user success is a far better indicator of library performance.

The dean of the graduate school I serve would never allow me to propose such a vision without helping him to understand the "bottom line." How much will it cost? Unfortunately, just as no single vision will fit every theology library, no one cost projection is adequate. I can suggest several factors that guide my thinking.

- Print materials show no signs of disappearing (at least in the near future). We still need a physical infrastructure to house and service such collections.
- Information technology is here to stay. Building an IT infrastructure designed to make the library's users successful is no longer an option. It is essential.
- The volume of information being published in one format or another continues to increase each year.
- On average, theology library budgets have been essentially flat for the past twenty years.

This suggests that theology libraries and their parent institutions need to:

- Explore new funding and business models that will provide the resources required for them to evolve in the next decade into libraries that can effectively serve their schools.
- Develop and expand collaborative networks that will allow each individual library to discover partners with whom it can work in the development of distributed collections and library services.

Theology libraries can be gathering places where the various stakeholders in theological education find the means and opportunities to collaborate with others, to utilize resources, and to discover new collaborative partnerships unbound by geographic location. In working to make its users successful, theology libraries will undoubtedly evolve, adapting to emerging pedagogical needs, the changing cultural expectations of its users, and the technological environment in which it exists.

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Jam To-morrow and Jam Yesterday, but Never Jam To-day:
The Dilemma of Theology Libraries Planning for the Twenty-first Century

ENDNOTES
9. Ibid., 134.
12. Ibid., 168.
17. Ibid., 132.
18. Ibid., 132-34.
26. Ibid., 448.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 43.
32. Ibid., 60.
34. O'Donnell, Avatars of the Word: From Papyrus to Cyberspace, 43.
40. Ibid., 112.
42. Ibid.
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51. Note that this does not necessarily imply a reduction in the costs.


53. Ibid., 1.

54. Ibid., 5.

55. Ibid.