

Adelaide Theological Library

The Adelaide Theological Library (ATL) was formed in 1997 when four theological collections were combined at the new Adelaide College of Divinity Campus. The Adelaide College of Divinity (ACD) is an ecumenical consortium of theological colleges from the Anglican, Catholic, and Uniting Churches, established in 1979; the ACD is also affiliated with Flinders University as the School of Theology. Faculty in ACD member colleges teach all the Flinders University courses in theology, and most of the teaching takes place at the ACD Campus.

The library's mission is to support people in their search for theological understanding by providing a professional and accessible service in a welcoming environment, and by developing an ecumenical collection.

The ATL is affiliated with the Flinders University Library, and is a member of the South Australian Universities Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement. The ATL is also open to students from other educational institutions and members of the public.

The permanent staff (2.28 FTE) are assisted by a small group of dedicated casual staff and volunteers.

As at the end of 2009, the ATL collection included approximately 66 000 titles and 230 paper and online periodical subscriptions. Flinders University Library provides selected technical services to the ATL through an annually negotiated Memorandum of Agreement. A major part of this activity is the Retrospective Cataloguing project which targets works published before 1960, and adds approximately 1200 titles to the catalogue each year. ATL catalogued items are recorded on the Flinders Library catalogue and Libraries Australia.

In addition to our regular purchases to support the courses taught at the ACD, we receive many donations from past students and retired clergy. Donations surplus to the library's needs are offered in our regular book sales which raise funds for the library.

One of the special features of the ATL is our valuable Rare Book collection. We hold books on the early development of churches in Australia, church missions throughout the world, early Bibles, hymn books and psalters, sermons, church magazines, early South Australian history, etc.; many of which are yet to be catalogued. In some cases we hold the only copy (or only print copy) of these early books listed in Australia.

The photograph with this article shows library staff looking at our copy of *The Psalms of David* by Owen Jones, published in 1862 – a book of full-page chromolithograph illuminations of translated Psalms. Jones is considered by some to be the greatest chromolithographic designer of the 19th century and a significant influence on William Morris, and, through him, the Arts & Crafts Movement. Jones used a restricted palette of red, blue, and gold, and the book is also known as the Victoria Psalter because Queen Victoria graciously accepted the dedication.

We would be pleased to welcome visitors to the ATL, either for a tour of the library or a viewing of our rare books (by appointment), or for conducting your own research at any time. Please contact us if we can offer any further information.



Photograph courtesy of Jon Guppy, Flinders University

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Theological Librarianship: God's calling to librarians

Theological librarianship is a very special form of special librarianship. For many theological librarians, it is often regarded as a ministry role within the religious denomination. Theological libraries are the cornerstone of theological education institutions as they provide students, lay persons, ministers, and others with a gateway to the historical development of theological thought throughout history.

Theological libraries cover a wide array of religious beliefs, spiritual disciplines, and faiths. They exist to support their students' growth, both intellectually and spiritually within the security of an educational institution. Theological libraries also provide access to the general public interested in religious information of any sort.

Theological libraries are frequently understaffed, which means theological librarians are often multi-talented, multi-skilled, and able to do almost anything. Many theological libraries are OPALs and the theological librarians within them are true gems! Networking opportunities with other theological librarians are highly valued and keenly sought after. The specialist skills needed are valuable, such as those acquired by the librarian if they have been trained within a theological institution. Theological librarians need to be adept at all numerous library tasks, just like any other special librarian, but they must also be familiar with the intricacies of not only their institution's denomination, but those of others as well.

Professional support for the theological librarian is available from numerous areas. For example, Australian and New Zealand theological librarians value belonging to an

association like ALIA and the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association (www.anztlea.org). It is here that like-minded librarians support each other, promoting professional development. This has especially been the case through the ANZTLA annual conference and state-based chapters.

In a world of ever-increasing subscription prices and publishing costs, theological texts can often be very expensive, meaning bargain-hunting skills are a valuable asset for the theological librarian. Being able to hunt around for the best price is a skill that many theological librarians possess and use well. Interlibrary cooperation is also a valuable tool among the theological library community. This ensures that students have access to the best resources they require to be able to complete their studies, regardless of the level of study – from Certificate IV through to Doctorate studies.

The Bible, for Christian theological librarians, defines ministry as a calling in a number of ways. For example, this ministry can be said to entail: prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, leadership and showing mercy, (Romans 12:3-8); apostleship, evangelism, pasturing and teaching, (Ephesians 4:11-12); and apostleship, prophesying, teaching, miracle working and administering, (1 Corinthians 12:28-31). Theological librarians are capable of excelling in all these areas of their ministry, whether they realise it or not.

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