

Chapter 7

Collection Development for Theological Education

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ABSTRACT

Students in graduate theological programs working toward ordination and a career in ministry in the Christian church require library collections that support their study of scripture, doctrine, ancient languages, and Biblical history and interpretation, as well as the practice of pastoral ministry, leadership, and administration. This chapter will discuss how to build collections at theological libraries measured against standards set by the Association of Theological Schools, the accrediting organization for theological schools in Canada and the United States; the importance of print and online reference works such as language dictionaries, atlases, and encyclopedias in theological library collections; indexes and databases for theological studies; important journals; the different categories of theological monographs; collection development policies; special collections in theological libraries; dealing with gifts and donors; and professional development resources for theological librarians.

INTRODUCTION

The Renaissance scholar Richard Hooker defined “theology” as “the science of things divine” (Hooker, 1907, p. 320), while the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* entry describes it as “the study or science which treats of God, His nature and attributes, and His relations with man and the universe” (Theology, 2011b). In Europe, the study of theology has its origins in the establishment of the great medieval universities. Theological lectures

were taking place at the Universities of Oxford and Paris by the 12th century (University of Oxford, 2009; Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2011), while in North America institutions like Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Laval in Quebec City were originally founded to train clergymen. Theology as a professional academic program in North America dates from 1807 when the Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts was founded and became the first institution to offer a formal course of study leading to a graduate

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degree and a career in ministry and pastoral leadership (Bendroth, 2008, p. 16). Today, libraries at theological schools (which may also be called divinity schools, divinity faculties, seminaries, or theological colleges) or at institutions supporting a professional theological program, collect materials in support of students pursuing master's degrees in preparation for ordination and religious leadership in a branch or denomination of the Christian church, or for careers in religious education, social work, counseling, and chaplaincy. Students may also be working toward doctoral degrees in order to teach at theological schools or religious studies departments, and many theological schools offer professional development and continuing education programs. A review of the Library of Congress Classification also illustrates the diverse number of subjects that fall under theology including not only God, the Bible and Biblical interpretation, but worship, liturgy, sacraments, religion and mass media, parish work, preaching, missionary activities, as well as the spectrum of major and minor Christian denominations. Readers of this chapter will have a better understanding of how to build and manage library collections that support theological education and theological students. The chapter will also discuss the differences between theology and religious studies, as well as questions of denominational or ideological collection bias.

BACKGROUND

The word "theology" is derived from the Latin *theologia*, which itself is derived from two Greek words: *theos*, the word for God, and *logos*, noting reason (Theology, 2011a). Plantinga, Thompson, and Lundberg (2010) describe theology, as it is studied and taught in colleges and universities, as "reasoned discourse about God" (p. 6). There are also several branches of theology: biblical theology, the study of the Bible as a way to understand and comprehend God and His revelations

through the prophets and the evangelists; historical theology, which applies historical methods to questions about belief, doctrine, and practice; and philosophical theology, which attempts to bring theology into dialogue with other branches of thought and study. Together, these branches may be grouped under the heading of systematic theology, which seeks to present a unified and coherent body of Christian beliefs and practices (Plantinga, et al., p. 17). Pastoral theology is the "study of the care of souls" (Drum, 1912) or the study of active religious ministry.

In North America, those seeking to be ordained in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches must hold a degree from an institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), an ecumenical membership organization of graduate theological schools in Canada and the United States. The Association's Commission on Accreditation is responsible for the accreditation process, as well as the ongoing review of accredited programs. Section five of the Commission's "Standards of Accreditation" (2010) deals specifically with library and information resources and acknowledges that the library is "a central resource for theological scholarship and education. It is integral to the purpose of the school through its contribution to teaching, learning, and research, and it functions collaboratively in curriculum development and implementation" (p. 83). The "Standards of Accreditation" also prescribe the requirements for accreditation and ensure that that the quality, form, and shape of theological education are broadly the same at all ATS member schools. Section nine of the ATS's "Handbook of Accreditation" (2006), the tool used to assess theological schools, deals with evaluating library and information resources, including collections. As such, the "Standards of Accreditation" and the "Handbook of Accreditation" are two essential tools that novice and seasoned theological librarians can refer to when building and managing a theological collection.

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