2006

Unto Edification: A Quarter Century of The Christian Librarian

Ron Jordahl

The Christian Librarian

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Unto Edification:

A Quarter Century of *The Christian Librarian*

This editor sincerely wishes it were possible to honor today the invitation extended in the first issue of *The Christian Librarian*: “If you would like to receive this newsletter regularly, send $0.50.” It was worth every penny of it, and we trust that those early editors would be able to say the same of *The Christian Librarian* as it appears today at current prices.

That first issue dated July 1957, confident of continuance, boldly declared itself “Vol. 1 No. 1.” Responsibility for each quarterly issue passed from one librarian to another. The first four numbers were prepared successively by Miss Judith Borlen of Buffalo Bible Institute, Miss Elizabeth Dinning of Washington Bible College, Miss Edith Ehlike of Fort Wayne Bible College, and Miss Eleanor Parry of Central Bible Institute.

The mimeographed paper, averaging four pages, reported on the activities and business of the Christian Librarian’s Fellowship, news of member libraries and librarians, contained synopses of some conference sessions, and also included some short articles and helpful notes.

Volume four, for instance, contained such appealing articles as “Can a Librarian be a Missionary?” by Carol Primmer, “Some Suggested CLF Goals for the Bible College and the Bible Institute” by Elgin Moyer, and “Prayer in a Library” by Kenneth J. Foreman.

In its third year the periodical settled into a pattern which was to continue for many years. The Newsletter Committee took responsibility for production of *The Christian Librarian*. Subscription was included in the dues for the Christian Librarians’ Fellowship. Miss Dorothea Williams took care of mimeographing and mailing the newsletter from Northwestern College Library. Each issue was prepared by a different person.

Volume twelve, 1968-1969, was the beginning of a more impressive magazine. Mrs. Alberta L. Chaffee of Cedarville College, chairman of the committee for volumes 12-15, added a color cover with pictures. The offset printing with justified lines was quite attractive. The average issue was thirteen pages of well-written material.

Dr. John Wittmer of Dallas Theological Seminary was chairman of the Newsletter Committee for volumes 16-18. Good quality paper was combined with interesting and professional content to make *The Christian Librarian* even more visible as a quality magazine.

P. Paul Snezek was appointed chairman of the Newsletter Committee for volume 19. Without access to a word processor or typesetting facilities, Mr. Snezek painstakingly jus-

**NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:**

This article originally appeared in *The Christian Librarian*, volume 25, issue numbers 3 and 4, May/August, 1982 – The ACL 25th anniversary special edition.
I was a librarian for ten years before I heard about the Association of Christian Librarians. Three years ago, a friend asked me if I was a member of the ACL. I asked him what the acronym stood for. I assumed it was a sub-group of the American Library Association. He told me it stood for the Association of Christian Librarians. I looked up their web-site and was impressed.

For a long time, I’ve been greatly interested in integrating my Christian faith with my vocation. I was surprised to find a book on Christian Librarianship in the library edited by Gregory Smith and Donald Davis. I read the book and thoroughly enjoyed it. Many of the chapters of this book are written by members of the Association of Christian Librarians. This commitment to Christian Librarianship is one of the things I appreciate about the ACL.

Not long after exploring ACL’s web-site, I joined the Association and registered to attend the conference to be held at Evangel University in Missouri. My first conference was excellent. One of the first people I met was Woodie Moore. I will never forget my first acquaintance with Woodie and his family. I will always remember how his daughter said that God was the first librarian. I came to love both Woodie and his family.

A second person I met at my first conference was Kevin Woodruff. Of course, he was dressed in a suit. I spent many hours talking to Kevin during my first conference. I came to appreciate Kevin very much. He is funny, witty, kind, open to other faith traditions. He, in some sense, took me under his wing and introduced me to members of the ACL and basically, made me feel welcome. If I haven’t told you, Kevin, thank you.

I can list many more people who have spread out the red carpet to me. What does the Association of Christian Librarians mean to me? It means people who love Jesus Christ, who are committed to following Him in their vocation, and are determined to love one another. I am very thankful to be a member of the Association of Christian Librarians.

John E. Shaffett, Library Director, Baptist College of Florida

What ACL Means to Me.

tified lines manually on a typewriter to maintain a professional appearance. Pounding out an average of 22 pages of solid content per issue, Mr. Snezek convinced the Board of Directors that his vision for the publication was viable.

Beginning in 1976 with volume 20, Paul Snezek edited The Christian Librarian, thereafter to be identified as the Journal of the Christian Librarians’ Fellowship. While continuing to print the news of the organization and serving as the official organ of CLF, The Christian Librarian took more seriously its role as a professional publication. Book reviews also appeared as a somewhat irregular feature.

Placement ads were accepted free of charge as a Christian service, a practice which continues to be a useful contribution to Christian librarianship. The first commercial ads appeared in volume 20.

Mr. Snezek declined reappointment as editor in 1978 because of great demands on his time. Ron Jordahl was appointed editor of volume 22, and continues as present editor of the journal.

During the past four years the editor has sought to build upon the foundational concepts of Paul Snezek. That vision has proven itself sound. When we began as a journal, it was difficult to find suitable articles. To scrape up sufficient content for each issue was a major task. Now attention can be given to improving quality because we are receiving an adequate supply of material with which to work. That is not to say that we are not seeking articles. Part of the editorial responsibility is to encourage writing and to provide a variety of subject matter to readers.
The Christian Librarian enjoys entries in a number of writers’ guides and receives inquiries from many prospective writers from outside the ACL membership.

Book reviews numbered eight in volume 20 and none in volume 21. Volume 24 contained twenty-eight and volume 25 carries more than fifty.

New features in the Journal include “Annotations,” a useful review of current library literature by Stephen P. Brown, and “Crossroads,” a column devoted to letters and information exchange.

The Journal is still far from what we hope for it, but the acceptance of it is encouraging. Response from all quarters is quite positive, and it is gratifying to receive commendations from readers who find it helpful. The Christian Librarian aims to become indispensable for the Christian librarian. God has blessed this endeavor of the Association of Christian Librarians as He has its other ministries.

In reviewing the past and anticipating the future of The Christian Librarian, it is fitting to conclude by reiterating the slated purpose of the Journal:

The Christian Librarian is one of the vehicles through which those who have joined the Association of Christian Librarians can communicate their interpretation of their vocation. It invites all those in the Association and others to submit material for consideration for publication.

2006 update from Ron Jordahl, Consulting Editor:

Recent History

Anne-Elizabeth Powell moved from the position of Assistant Editor to Editor-in-Chief in 1999. Under her leadership TCL has become a polished journal, a credit to her creativity and industry. Visual appeal as well as professional content and careful editing demand reader attention. No small credit is also due a visionary and supportive ACL Board of Directors.

Personal notes

TCL was a labor of love for me. Great joy came through association with ACL members and those outside the organization that I persuaded to contribute. I was shameless in asking small and great for articles. Some still berate me for arm-twisting. One of my treasures was a hand-written contribution to the Journal by Carl F. H. Henry.

For several years copy was typeset on narrow strips of paper which were then waxed on the back. I cut and mounted the copy into three columns to produce a master page for printing. An error was corrected by typing a new line and placing it over the offending line. Getting the little strip straight was not easy for clumsy fingers. Though tedious, the task was rewarding; seeing the finished page was a joy. More fun than that, though, was figuring out how much space a typewritten article would occupy in three columns of 10-point type.

The biggest challenge came in 1982, the twenty-fifth anniversary of ACL. I was ACL President at the time, hosted the annual conference, and presented the 25th anniversary issue of The Christian Librarian (I was more young then). To relieve some pressure and cost, we combined the May and August issues in the 120-page anniversary issue. My school graciously permitted me the time to do this, as well as allowing me to use one of my library workers, who along with my wife, spent days on end pasting copy. ♦