



Volume 44 | Issue 1

Article 6

2001

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Recommended Citation

Cropley, Wilbur E. (2001) "Librarians Across The Sea: ACL And Missions," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 44: Iss. 1, Article 6.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.1839>

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LIBRARIANS ACROSS THE SEAS: ACL AND MISSIONS

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The Association of Christian Librarians (ACL) is missions-hearted, missions-minded, and missions-handled. This stance was vital to the founders. It is also vital for the calling and ministry of the present membership. We shall expand and illustrate these statements. The past, present development, and future will be covered.

THE HISTORY OF ACL

In the summer of 1956, Miss Shirley N. Wood met briefly with four other librarians of Christian colleges and a seminary. They found that they all had one desire and prayer: a desire to interact with and mutually support each other. Christian librarians were serving in almost complete isolation from each other. The secular organizations had different interests and a worldly outlook. In the spring of 1957, Miss Wood wrote a letter (seen by this author) to the other four librarians suggesting a meeting.

Without formal organization, with a hastily composed mailing list, and a quickly arranged program, seventeen librarians were present at the first conference in the Summer of 1957. At that meeting, three steps were initiated: 1) quarterly publication of *The Christian Librarian* (TCL), 1957 – present; 2) publication of the *Christian Periodical Index* (CPI) 1958 – present; and 3) the founding of a permanent organization.

In 1958, a committee was chosen to arrange the next year's conference.

Another was elected to compose a constitution, by-laws, and a statement of faith. Steady growth in membership, attendance, budget, and range and depth of activities has occurred every year.¹ (For further information, see the 25th anniversary printing of TCL. Much of the data for the early history of ACL is found therein.) ACL founders built much better than they realized. These basic goals and structure still characterize the ACL.

MISSIONS NEEDS

This writer will attempt to list the missions needs that the ACL, its publications, members, and their educational establishments can and do apply to missions needs.

1. Consciousness of the necessity of missions among the faculty, administration, staff, students, establishment supporters, and the local community.

2. Consciousness arousal concerning the life, work, location, and types of missionaries.

3. The calling and education of a wide variety of missionaries.

4. A forum for discussion of missions work, specifically as related to library work.

5. A place for missions and overseas Christian agencies to advertise positions open, both long term and short term.

6. The training and organization of Christian librarians for work on mission fields.

7. A place for Christian librarians to report their experiences in short term

work on mission fields. This work is mostly in library staff training, library organization and operations, cataloging, and counseling of leaders on administrative structure and regional accreditation.

8. The compiling, editing, review, printing, and distribution of library manuals for missionaries, and overseas national library personnel.

9. Scholarships for attendance at ACL conventions for overseas library work

10. The collection of books, periodicals, equipment, etc., and their distribution to overseas missionaries, pastors, teachers, libraries, and students.

THE APPLIED RESOURCES

Considering this list of missions needs, what resources does ACL, its members and their employing organizations apply to the ministry of missions? A listing and discussion follows.

1. Spirituality, the key resource. This is the heart and mind-knowledge of the written word of God. It is the will to follow that word, through the guidance and strengthening of the Holy Spirit. According to E. Moyer, it is servanthood. Roger R. Nicole points out the "spiritual dimension of the librarian's task."

2. The nature of the colleges and seminaries in which ACL members serve. Almost all of these are conservative, Christian, and ministry/missions oriented. The researcher needs only observe the ACL Membership Directories, and the list of the institutions in which the members serve. Of interest are the large number of Bible colleges. It is often asserted that half the missionaries from the U.S. and Canada are Bible college graduates.² (Also see John Kayser.)

3. This writer recalls the Missions Emphasis Weeks observed in various Bible colleges. Regular class schedules are suspended. Many missionaries and mission agencies appear. Regular features of these weeks are library

displays, study groups and seminars, organizational displays, and addresses by well-known mission leaders.

4. Library resources in the colleges and seminaries served by ACL members. This writer has seen many libraries of ACL members. They have substantial acquisitions and collections of missions books, journals, and agency news letters relating to missions.

5. The *Christian Periodical Index* (CPI). This index includes seventeen periodicals having exclusive or large missions content. The CPI also reviews books concerning missions. ACL members serving as short-term missionaries mention seeing the CPI on the field.

6. The ACL has compiled and published suggested periodical lists for library assessment, which contain a missions section.

7. A report in TCL discusses ACL and ACL members involvement in missions in the first 25 years. "ACL involvements in missions are several: through its publications, financial aid," long and short-term overseas work, service on "denominational mission boards, church missions committees, and church libraries." The latest Membership Handbook lists many ACL members serving in overseas countries, both native and missionary. This provides fellowship and professional contact.

8. The missions section of the Dewey Decimal Classification was developed and expanded by Shirley N. Wood of Columbia Bible College. This expansion was formally incorporated into the 17th edition of DDC.

9. A major contribution was the publishing in 1979 of the *Library Manual for Missionaries*, edited by Clara Ruth Stone, an ACL publication. At the 1987 General Business Meeting authorization was given for a revision of this manual. The work was done at the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Ill. The manual was taken to Zaire for on-site testing with ACL support. Revision and further testing was authorized one year later. Publication and formal

presentation of the *Librarian's Manual* (new title) was made at the 1994 annual ACL conference. The 1994 report mentions the history of, personnel involved, and the sources of delay and difficulties involved in this effort. A Russian language edition was authorized in 1995.

10. The ACL has had committees and commissions of various names, authorized to oversee, coordinate, and publicize library missions work. This was before 1988. Later, in 1991, the committee was reorganized and named the Commission for International Library Assistance (CILA), a name used to the present. The Mission Statement of CILA follows: "The Commission for International Library Assistance (CILA) serves libraries in Christian institutions of higher learning in the developing world with the organizing and managing of their collections, the training of their staff and the strengthening of an infrastructure to maintain and improve themselves." An abbreviated list of "CILA Service Projects" follows: 1) Librarian's Manual, mentioned above; 2) Librarian's Manual Teaching Syllabus; 3) Librarian's Helper, software for library cards; 4) training seminars held worldwide; 5) volunteer service, one month to some years worldwide.³ This commission sponsors a regular feature in TCL. This is a one to three-page article of commentary, listings of opportunities, and reports. It is convenient that all this is in one location, with an editor in charge.

11. Let us compare library science worldwide. Only Canada, England, the U.S., and maybe Australia, possess the library schools, public and college libraries and publishing houses that are highly advanced as compared to even Western European nations. This results in curious circumstances. Thus a foreign student must come here to study his native country. Roger R. Nicole mentions one highly regarded library in Europe, where the books were shelved not by subject, but by order of accession.

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nance schedule for the cars they build, God recommends a maintenance schedule for the people He has created. Jesus, when He stated that the Sabbath was made for man, was quite possibly alluding to this physical purpose for the commandment. If this line of reasoning is accepted, then the need for human rest continues to exist in the 21st century. Keeping the Sabbath for physical refreshment has never been repealed.

Conversely, the spiritual nature of Sabbath-keeping has changed. Israel was asked to look back at their redemption from Egypt and celebrate the event

on the Sabbath. The importance of this "remembering" is continually stressed in the Old Testament. The church in the New Testament, however, is not asked to remember its redemption from Egypt. Instead, the event we are asked to remember during the Lord's Supper is Christ's death on the cross. Why has the object of remembering changed? Because at the cross, redemption for all mankind was attained—a redemption that was only prefigured in the Exodus.

Colossians 2:13-17 calls the Sabbath "a shadow of the things that were to come." Christ is the reality toward which the shadow (redemption

from Egypt) of the spiritual Sabbath pointed. Further, in Hebrews 4, the biblical author argues that the message of redemption that the Sabbath signifies must be combined with faith—even as the redemptive work of Christ must be appropriated by faith if we are to receive the Sabbath-rest that is available. Jesus Christ has worked and sits by the Father; therefore, we can rest in (and not work for) the salvation that He provides.

What does all of this mean for us as librarians? Stay tuned for the next column.

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continued from page 21.)

These resources and skills are a result of the profound and radical advances made by Melvil Dewey between 1875 and 1880. These advances have put a very valuable resource in the hands of ACL and its members. They must be and are being utilized overseas by ACL and its members, as they are on the North American continent, and in the U.K. They are an integral part of education, as now conceived.

12. We may briefly note other Christian library work. TCL relates that done in England by the Librarian's Christian Fellowship of Great Britain. Comparing ACL and LCF, there are similarities and differences. The Evangelical Literature Trust organization supplies books in English, French, and Spanish to Third World seminary libraries. On the mission fields, we see librarians at work in mission schools. Librarians with Wycliffe Bible Translators have unique work problems.

CONCLUSION

The above is clearly an orientation to its topic, the ACL and missions, written for non-librarians. This highly condensed summary is all that is possible here. Detailed information may be found in ACL publications, and contacts with the ACL.

It is also clear that much ACL work

with missions is with Bible colleges, Bible institutes, and seminaries. This is obviously not "unreached people" work. If this work is successful, it will bring about parity in resources, accessibility, and professionalism. What will be the effect of alternate ethnic and national outlooks? Much of mission and education work is still affected by North American outlooks, many of which are not yet conscious. Will the changes be acceptable to North American believers? Note that a complete article on libraries and missions would also treat lower school, literacy, and literature distribution work.

This is an age of rapid and profound change in literature production and distribution. Not since the invention of writing and the printing press has civilization seen changes such as these. I refer to electronic means such as "desktop publishing" and full text transmission by Internet and satellite. The ACL is now working on Internet interactions and CD-ROM distribution. The possibilities may be seen in BJ LINC Live Interactive Network Classroom at Bob Jones University. With satellite transmission, and interactive telephone links, BJ LINC is attempting to bring a wide range of high school subjects to Christian schools. The application to missions schools is immediately obvious, as is that to missionary families in remote location.

A certain obvious problem troubles this writer in researching this article. This is the lack of certain subject headings in the Library of Congress Subject Headings, and Sears Subject Headings. This reduces the researcher to scanning a large number of periodicals and books, one at a time, for relevant materials. This laborious process is exactly what subject headings and indexing are intended to bypass. CPI uses a few fabricated headings and many adapted headings. Some suggestions may include, "Libraries, Missions," "Librarians and Missions," "Missions, Libraries," "Missions and Librarians," and "Mission Libraries." There is a sufficiently large amount of material to justify their use.

¹ *The Christian Librarian*. (Most of the data is derived from this periodical, especially the 25th year issue, May 1982.)

² Kayser, John. "How a Bible Institute Imparts Missionary Vision." *EMQ* 21:406-8 Oct 1985.

³ *ACL 1997 Membership Handbook*, 21-2.