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# THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF VOCATION FOR LIBRARIANS

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**L**ike two brothers, western civilization and Christianity grew up together. Christianity gave the civilization its virtues, its view of work, and its view of service. With the decline of Christian influence, there is an increasing separation between virtue, service and work. This has led to vocational crisis in professions which have described themselves as vocations. Nurses, doctors and teachers have noticed the problem. This paper will make some observations concerning the crisis, give historical and biblical insights into our view of vocation, discuss some errors with the viewpoints, give some proposals for improving the situation and conclude with a summary.

## THE VOCATIONAL CRISIS

Let us begin with an example of the crisis in vocations. In a perceptive article, Digby Anderson, a director of a London think tank discusses the vocational crisis in nursing, a "part of a wider crisis in professionalism." He observes that the number of persons entering nurses training in Britain fell by 39% in the period from 1987 to 1994. The quality of patient care has declined and patients are not washed in some hospitals. Mr. Anderson summarizes what happened. Nurses were trained on a monastic model. They obeyed rules of silence, obedience and duty. The climate was one of "serious-

ness, calm, modesty and purpose. And the main purpose was service—the washing, turning, feeding and looking after of patients too sick to care for themselves." Their role caused the decline of nursing. On the economic "right" nurses offended rational, efficient management. Nurses were made managers, issuing protocols from distant offices. On the political "left" nursing offended egalitarianism, individual professional autonomy, the cult of informality, and feminism. More status had to be found for nurses. Status was not to be sought in demeaning service but in expertise and managerialism. In pursuit of expertise, training was removed from the bedside to the university. Theory replaced practice. Loyalty to knowledge replaced duty to vocation. The irony is that it has not increased recruitment. But it has severely damaged the true professionalism of nursing.

Mr. Anderson added, "The story is not a new one. Teachers were twenty years ahead of nursing in committing professional suicide." Mr. Anderson draws a frightening conclusion.

Professions have several characteristics. One of them, expertise, is currently assumed to be the defining element: The more expertise, the better state the profession is in. Nursing today has more expertise than ever before, and so do law and academe. But professionally, they are in trouble. For becoming a nurse, professor, lawyer



or doctor is not about acquiring a bunch of expert tricks but becoming a certain sort of person with certain virtues. ... Indeed, it's even more than that. It is about entering a community, a college of others with the same character. The late 20th century has tried to have profession without virtue and it has not worked.<sup>1</sup>

Profession without virtue has not worked. And virtue without Jesus Christ does not last long.

## THE DEFINITION OF VOCATION

The Latin language is the source of the word, vocation. It comes from "voco, vocare, vocatus"—meaning "to summon, to call, to name, to call upon, to invite, to challenge."<sup>2</sup> In English the word has a further meaning, when tied to the ideal of professionalism. It is generally used as follows:

- 1) a regular occupation, especially one for which a person is particularly suited or qualified;
- 2) an inclination, as if in response to summons, to undertake a certain kind of work, specially a religious career. The phrase, "as if in response to a summons," introduces a mystical quality. If the word "profession" is brought into the discussion, there is a degree of religious-secular conceptual crossover. One definition of that word, from the same dictionary, is an occupation requiring considerable training and specialized study. In most religious orders and congregations the taking of final vows is referred to as "making one's profession." Professionalism is part of vocation, but vocation suggests a higher calling, something requiring time, training and commitment, with an ineffable quality that goes beyond a job.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. John Siberski notes the following characteristics of a vocation:

- 1) It includes a call to serve other people at some stage.
- 2) It includes a call to influence or be a model for other persons

through the vocation.

3) It shows faith in God's presence as illustrated by the model of Abram following God's call to leave and go to a different land (i.e., vocation).<sup>4</sup>

Since it relates to our vocations as librarians, I will quote at length Dr. Siberski's example of vocational influence.

My twin bother and I attended a small public high school. Regina Robaczewski, the librarian, was determined that students should become self-sufficient in a library of any kind. About 17 years after finishing high school, while planning the guest list for a party to celebrate his master's degree, Jim was adamant that Miss Robaczewski, who had been in retirement for over a decade, be invited. He responded to a quizzical look saying, "The only thing I learned in high school was how to use the library, which is how I got through this degree. If it weren't for her, this party wouldn't be happening." The surprise on my face reflected that I had felt something similar years earlier upon first walking into Penn State's sprawling Patte Library as a freshman. "Big . . . but I can handle it." During the party we were able to thank her for the influence she had on our education. She glowed.<sup>5</sup>

A good librarian does make a difference.

## THE HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF VOCATION

Biblically, the idea of vocation was established early. Adam and Eve were called on to care for the creation (Gen. 1:28). Noah was called to build an ark and save people, animals and birds (Gen. 6:13-22). In the New Testament, Jesus called the twelve disciples before His death and Paul after it. The Bible promises that God will continue to call men and women to follow Jesus, in religion and in work.

In the western church before the Reformation, "vocation" was limited to

religious vocations such as those followed by monks. Daily work was denigrated. Martin Luther took the word "vocation" and applied it to all daily activities of all Christians. "Thus, Christian vocation includes all aspects of life—family, community, education, citizenship, paid and unpaid work, and long-term and occasional responsibilities of other types."<sup>6</sup>

This essay is primarily concerned with paid work, and will emphasize it. Let me note before going farther that paid work is only part of God's vocational will for us.

The reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, had two doctrinal pillars upon which they based their view of vocation. One was the universal priesthood of believers, which marked the beginning of a new understanding of the laity.<sup>7</sup> Luther used it to affirm the common dignity, calling, and privileges of all believers before God. Both Israel and the church are distinguished from other peoples as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). All church members are to offer spiritual sacrifices including praise and the service of Christian love (1 Pet 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16).<sup>8</sup> The universal priesthood implies an equality in the vocational callings of Christians. The call to the priesthood of believers is a call to good works. God frequently calls us to vocations by showing us needs — needs we can meet. "Vocation in this sense is not a voice in the night but a steady preoccupation with a particular need. Often the need is personified in an individual—St. Francis' leprous beggar or Dr. Barnardo's first tarpaulin orphan."<sup>9</sup> In my case classmates asking me for help in using a library was a factor.

The other pillar of the Reformation view of vocationalism was the doctrine of creation. This understanding of creation encompasses several claims. First "... God is intimately involved with everything that is; we are never not in relationship to God." This means that He is involved with all jobs that people do, at all times and places.



Second, "God is to be understood as acting in the world primarily in and through what is created." For example, God creates new people through parents. God feeds people through our agricultural system. One way God preserves and organizes knowledge is through librarians. Thus, people are "co-workers" with God in the care of the earth and its fullness.<sup>10</sup> Third, God created us. This implies that "... each man's vocation consists primarily of his creation as a unique individual, with a pattern of characteristics bestowed on him by nature and nurture. His basic response to God the Creator should therefore be to realize his potentialities."<sup>11</sup> These potentialities are of course realized in the context of God's will for our lives.

Let us move to the problem of sin and evil that affects vocations. People on earth do not love their neighbors or the earth the way they should. They abuse others, themselves, and pollute the creation. In this context, salvation is offered in Jesus Christ to complete, restore, and fulfill God's creative work.<sup>12</sup> When a woman is converted by believing on Jesus Christ for salvation and repenting of her sins, the change in her life means that she treats her family and co-workers better. She is kinder to her dog, and takes better care of her plants. She is more likely to become involved in volunteer work with unselfish motives.

Salvation begins the life-long process of sanctification. Because we are sinners, our attitudes toward our work are affected by our sin. We may find ourselves hating or resisting aspects of our work God wants to put to use. Following the apostle Paul, Luther said that God puts this old self to death by the law, and the place where the law works on us is in the demands of our callings. Through the demands of our callings the sinful self is forced to love the neighbor (even as the new self in faith gladly does so) and God puts the old self to death day by day. This notion of a cross in one's calling can assist us in making sense of failure,

frustration, conflict, and even tragedy in our work. We do not usually think of such negative experience as giving anything "meaning," but Luther would advise us that this is a realistic way to look at life and work; therefore, these experiences too, belong to the meaning of our work.<sup>13</sup>

Biblical law is given in part to counter the effects of sin on our vocations. As the Apostle John says,

*Faith in God gives delight in our work and enjoyment of the meaning we find in it... Jesus' motivation for the vocation of the cross was joy.*

"sin is the breaking of the law" (1 John 3:4). The law convicts us of sin, which leads to repentance and reformation of behavior. Another very important function of the law is to tell us God's will. When Jesus summarizes the Law as love for God and neighbor, He is saying that the biblical law teaches us how to love our God and neighbor, which is the content of God's will (Matt. 22:37-40). If I love my neighbor I will not steal from him, lie to him, abuse his daughter, or make him work when he should be at worship. Unfortunately modern American society has a view of law as restrictive. The Bible rejects this view and instead teaches that biblical law is to guide and aid us in our service to God and our neighbor. Prof. Kolden said it well, "Law is intended to serve creation, not shackle it; law is to guide creatures, not imprison them."<sup>14</sup>

The second counter to problems caused by sin is faith in God. The effects of sin on work are many, long hours, low pay, back (or mind)-breaking work, a lack of recognition, boring routines, grumpy colleagues, unfair demands, and other people's mistakes. Physician John Siberski records how God's promise to Abram to leave the familiar and trust God helped him through the long years of medical school and the daily grind of healing people.

Giving of oneself daily can siphon

everything before replenishment is possible. There may be no one to comfort the comforter or heal the healer. Remembering God's promise to Abram to show the way can take one through some very difficult moments.<sup>15</sup>

Faith also helps counter to the effects of sin by obtaining joy in our vocation. Faith in God gives delight in our work and enjoyment of the meaning we find in it. Our achievements at work

frequently contribute to our self-respect. Work enables us to find a niche in which we contribute, use, and develop our abilities.<sup>16</sup> Jesus' motivation for the vocation of the cross was joy. (Heb. 12:2)

Faith also reminds us that God calls us to growth through our troubles. Frequently our growth takes place in response to needs that appear to be beyond our power. It is God creating within us the power to be the kind of person who can meet the challenges He sends us. A capricious girl is transformed into a mother who is able to love her disabled child in a deep and constant way<sup>17</sup> (see Psalm 113:9).

There are two important differences in positions of Luther and Calvin. Luther stresses that one serves God precisely in one's calling, in the types of activities that God requires. "The danger with Lutheranism's view of vocation is that it led all too easily to an uncritical acceptance of the status quo and a neglect of the Christian's role in social change."<sup>18</sup>

Calvin modified "Luther's position by stating that one serves God primarily through one's calling. The effect of this modification was to add a transformative dimension to the idea of vocation: One measures the value of one's vocation in terms of the extent to which it serves the purposes of faith. The outcome of this was a tendency on the part of Calvinism in some situations to



downplay the mundane duties of any given calling and to lift high the glorious end this calling serves.”<sup>19</sup>

A second difference between Luther and Calvin is that Luther focused on the “need of the neighbor” in assessing whether any specific activity could be adjudged a divine calling: If good could be accomplished through this activity, then it constituted a divine calling. Beyond this, Calvin called attention to the gifts God had bestowed on a person. Personal gifts were to be seen as divine direction in seeking appropriate work. If held together, the emphases of both Luther and Calvin are important. By itself, Luther’s emphasis, despite its salutary focus on the need of the neighbor, could lead to a neglect of the development of one’s talents or a failure to confront alienating or dehumanizing work. By the same token, Calvin’s emphasis could lead one to focus so much on personal gifts (talents, interests) that the notion of rendering service evaporates, especially in a secular society.”<sup>20</sup>

We move from the Reformation to the 19th century English-speaking world, when the modern profession of librarianship was created. By the 19th century the Reformation view of vocation had largely perished.

Particularly under the influence of Idealism, the fundamental criterion of Christian vocation was reversed. The question became not so much how one might best serve the community, but rather how one might most fruitfully put one’s own gifts or talents to use in the search for self-fulfilment. The simple economic and social rationalisation of this step was to argue that the common good is the individual’s self-interest.<sup>21</sup>

In the 19th and early 20th centuries the jobs given vocational status were education, medicine, law, the military, and possibly business. For most persons, work was a matter of survival rather than vocation. This elitism represented a reintroduction of the pre-Reformation double vocational standard in a secularized form.

The elitist view held that only some

persons could have vocations, the fields listed above. If vocation is limited to these occupations, do the other occupations become commodities to be bought and sold like merchandise? This view created a divorce between jobs and vocations, with two sets of values. Which set of values would win?<sup>22</sup>

This view effected the treatment of those in commodity type jobs. To give some idea how the people in non-vocation jobs were treated in that time period, I will tell a story from our family history. In the early part of this century, my Grandfather was a coal miner for Frick Coal and Coke Company. The company maintained a strangle hold on the miners. Miners lived in company housing, were paid in a company script which was redeemable only at the company store, and frequently laid off to prevent them from accumulating savings. To maintain its power, the company employed its own police force. It is no surprise that the miners eventually went on strike. My Father told me of a striking family that had its furniture and belongings taken from the company house it resided in, put in a wagon, carted out of the company town into a field, and dumped onto the field during a rainstorm.

In the 19th century vocation was understood as “a calling away from other people, a calling out of the insecurity and suffering of the corporate reality of the mass market, or in short, as a means of sanctifying ambitions which were hardly altruistic.”<sup>23</sup>

As we know, modern Library Science was largely founded by Melvil Dewey and his co-workers. In Dewey’s biography we read that “character” was a qualification for librarians. Biographer Wayne A. Wiegand records that Dewey himself had a vocation sense. He credits Mr. and Mrs. Dewey with advocating the following virtues: “Christian love, humility, self-control, the Golden Rule, and a sense of duty wrapped tightly in a concept of lifelong service to humankind.”<sup>24</sup>

Library Science was founded near the end of a time when “character” was

an important job qualification. It was listed in the advertisements. How many recent read advertisements for librarians list character as a qualification? Fortunately, it is still a consideration in the admission to library science school.

Let us ponder some ways in which the profession has changed. In the early days of librarianship, librarians were expected to protect the public from “bad books.” Now the profession teaches that good books are good for people, but bad books are not bad for people. I keep wondering how the American Library Association’s defending child pornography and those who sell it helps librarianship. Indeed the current debate about Internet filtering in libraries reminds one of the “good book/bad book” debates of years past.

Nevertheless, there are some admirable virtues implied or stated in the ALA Code of Ethics of 1995. These include “the highest level of service to all library users,” honesty with respect to intellectual property rights, treating co-workers “with respect, fairness and good faith,” not advancing our own interests at the expense of our patrons, colleagues, or employers, not allowing our personal beliefs to interfere with the fair representation of our employers or access to their resources, and striving for excellence by improving our skills and continuing education. If the American Library Association would limit itself to the activities listed in its code of ethics there would be more harmony among its members. Instead, there are many groups seeking to use the voice of ALA to further their political agendas. The Association of College and Research Libraries has wisely limited its resolutions solely to matters affecting libraries. One hopes the rest of ALA will do the same.

## ERRORS IN VOCATION THINKING

The “inner call” is often used in Christian circles as the means of vocational decision making. This usually means that



God lays a call upon our heart without external means. However, the evidence from the Bible is that the inner call is rarely used by God. Let us take some examples of God calling men to prove this point. From the Old Testament, Samuel is called by a voice he hears in the night, David and Saul are called to be kings by God speaking through Samuel, and Isaiah was called by vision in the temple of calling him. In the

New Testament, Jesus verbally calls the disciples to follow him. Paul is called to conversion by a vision, and Paul and Barnabas are called to be missionaries by the Holy Spirit working through the means of church leaders (Acts 13:2). Since the Holy Spirit continues work through the church, the church is an effective agent of vocational calling. An example from Church history will show this. A unbaptized Roman official named Ambrose went into a church to warn its members that the election for bishop should not degenerate into a riot. The resulting work of the Holy Spirit surprised everyone. Ambrose was elected bishop. He was baptized and rushed through holy orders, and became the famous St. Ambrose of Milan, one of the greatest bishops of the early church. These examples show that we must be careful about too much emphasis on the internal call to a vocation, and place more emphasis on the external call. The implication here is that we should encourage people with the talents to be good librarians to consider our profession, and not assume we are called to be librarians (or anything else) without external support for our call.

## APPLICATIONS

In considering our call as Christian librarians, we must ask, what can Christians called to be librarians do to change the direction of the American

Library Association and librarianship in general? The best work I know of this on this subject is Douglas Hyde's *Dedication and Leadership*. Mr. Hyde was a communist who rose to become the editor of the communist newspaper in England. After his conversion, he wrote this book to inform Christians of

*Most importantly, we have a responsibility to train other librarians. This includes not only training in the techniques of library science, but also character development, and the understanding of a Christian world view and how it applies to librarianship.*

the legal and ethical methods communists used to influence different associations, and encourage their imitation.

The first step is to do an excellent job in the library God has placed you in. This gains the respect of colleagues and results in them listening better to us. Mr. Hyde observes:

You may announce and organize a public meeting and if you work sufficiently hard, perhaps for weeks and months on end and, if you have a good or well-known speaker, you may be able to get together an audience of 5,000 people. If you do, you will probably consider that you have had more than usual success. But capitalist society presents the Communist with, maybe, scores of thousands of people as a ready-made audience, not just once, but every day. This audience is presented to him free, at the enemy's expense. The capitalists provide the building, they get the people together and give him the opportunity to be with them for six, seven, maybe eight or more hours a day. He stands among them at his machine as they work, he eats with them in the canteen at lunchtime, chats with them during the morning and afternoon tea breaks.<sup>25</sup>

Work gives us a wonderful opportunity to share Jesus Christ. Next, become active in professional associations such

as ALA and the various state associations. Work your way up in the association by taking committee assignments, or other ways. Think about the issues facing the association. What does the Bible say about these issues? What is the Christian perspective on this issue? How can I serve in

an honest and aboveboard manner? You will find that hard work, honesty and consideration for others are keys to ad-

vancement. I can hear the objections now. "I don't have the time. I don't have the money. I don't have the energy. I don't have the talent." You are right, of course you don't. That is why God wants us to pray, trust and obey, so He can help us overcome our needs for money, time, energy and talent. Douglas Hyde gives several suggestions on how to work through organizations to spread the Gospel.<sup>26</sup>

We must also organize. It is unlikely that one librarian can change the course of the American Librarian Association or the profession. A small organized group willing to pray and work hard can have a great effect. Those of you who have been deceived by the modern American obsession with large body counts, should remember that God pared Gideon's army down to 300 men. The Gideons, a group of men who are presently giving away a million Bibles and New Testaments each week, began with only two men a century ago. God likes to use small groups to show His power.

Most importantly, we also have a responsibility to train other librarians, especially our brothers and sisters. This includes not only training in the techniques of library science, but also character development, and the understanding of a Christian world view and how it applies to librarianship. Those of us who have not had the opportunity for this kind of training



must make up for it through, reading, seminars, Association of Christian Librarians conferences, or whatever God makes available.<sup>27</sup> The most valuable suggestion I can make is for the ACL to design a training program based on chapter four of Hyde's work. This could be a motivational course designed to teach Christian librarians a Christian worldview and inspire them to use their professions and lives to battle against evil in our society.

I would like to close with a summary of a sermon Douglas Hyde once heard from an old Indian priest of some very poor people. The priest told his congregation that

[T]he women on the first Easter Sunday went for looking in the garden for the risen Lord. They looked in the tomb, and they did not find Him there. They looked around the garden; again they could not find Him. But, said the preacher, "you do not have to look in a tomb, you do not have to look around a garden to find the risen Lord. He is in your hands. When you go out to work tomorrow, whether you are riding a trishaw, or digging a drain or whatever you may be doing as your daily work, you will be co-operating in God's work of creation. God is in your hands."<sup>28</sup>

While the sermon was going on Mr. Hyde watched a poor, age weary Indian coolie.

As the preacher said the words "God is in your hands," I saw the old man look at his toil-worn, calloused, twisted hands, and broken nails, almost in awe. Something tremendous was happening to him. One could watch a great yet simple truth enter his consciousness. Recognition of it spread across this face, which took on a look of sheer wonderment. Throughout the rest of the sermon he looked, time after time, at the hands which had suddenly taken on a new, sublime significance. It is my guess that his work, . . . would

never be the same for him again. Suddenly, no matter how degraded that work might be, it became meaningful for him. His Christianity suddenly became relevant to his work. . . . His beliefs could be related to cleaning the monsoon drains the next day, or pedalling away from morning till night on a heavy trishaw."<sup>29</sup>  
God has chosen to put His work in our hands, may we prove faithful.

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<sup>1</sup> Digby Anderson, "Work without Virtue, or the Decline of Professionalism," *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 October 1998, p. A22.

<sup>2</sup> John R. Siberski. "Medicine: Vocation or Job?" *America*, May 5, 1996, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Marc Kolden. "Work and Meaning: Some Theological Reflections." *Interpretation* 48 (July 1994), pp. 267. There has been broadening of the Roman Catholic view of vocation since the Reformation. For example, Siberski quotes Cardinal Joseph Bernardin as saying that medicine is a vocation (Siberski, p. 22). This article focuses on the Protestant viewpoint that has been most influential on English and American societies.

<sup>7</sup> Iain G. Nicol. "Vocation and the People of God." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 (no. 4, 1980), p. 362.

<sup>8</sup> *New Dictionary of Theology*, 1988, s.v. "Priesthood of All Believers," by C. Eastwood. For a book length study see, C. Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers. An examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day.* (London: Epworth Press, 1960).

<sup>9</sup> John Adair. "The Doctrine of Creation." *Theology* 67 (July 1964) p. 297.

<sup>10</sup> Kolden, p. 263.

<sup>11</sup> Adair, p. 296.

<sup>12</sup> Kolden, p. 264.

<sup>13</sup> Kolden, p. 269.

<sup>14</sup> Kolden, p. 265.

<sup>15</sup> Siberski, p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Kolden, p. 269.

<sup>17</sup> John Adair. "The Doctrine of Creation." *Theology* 67 (July 1964) pp. 295-298.

<sup>18</sup> Kolden, p. 267.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Iain G. Nicol. "Vocation and the People of God." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 (no. 4, 1980), pp. 362.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>24</sup> Wayne A. Wiegand, *Irrepressible Reformer*, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1996) p. 85, 311, 55-56.

<sup>25</sup> Douglas Hyde, *Dedication and Leadership*, (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966) p. 97.

<sup>26</sup> See pages 143-146 of Hyde concerning how to witness for Jesus and turn organizations to a Christian worldview.

<sup>27</sup> For an excellent example of how training can change an unlikely candidate see the chapter entitled "The Story of Jim" in Hyde, p. 62-72. For ideas on training see Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95-96.

<sup>29</sup> Hyde, p. 96.



(Continued from page 9.)

Frustration over the issue of Internet filters arises because the software is imperfect but also perhaps because librarians feel powerless on their own campuses.

One librarian commented, "A good portion of the negative response to filtering was due to the lack of information that the filter would be installed." Another reported that the librarians had "no say" in the selection of the filter.

This particularly disturbing account came from one library:

"Our University Administration (Cabinet) without anybody's knowledge decided to put a filter (Net Nanny) on the university computer system in January 1998. Students, faculty and staff started getting messages that the internet site they were trying to access was blocked. Many people across campus did not or could not figure out why all of the sudden sites that they had used were being blocked. They did not realize it was because of filtering software. Finally the word got out after three days. Many of the faculty, graduate students and some undergraduates complained to the administration about censorship and academic freedom. Someone called the local paper, and reporters from the media started asking questions. An article that was tastefully written about filtering and our university was on the front page. The Cabinet saw that the software was not working like they thought it would after some testing and decided not to use filtering software. I think that most of the faculty here felt betrayed because the administration did not feel that a campus wide discussion on filtering was needed before loading the soft-

### "ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR FILTERING SOFTWARE?"

	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
Number responding	10 of 21 48%	3 of 21 14%	2 of 21 10%	3 of 21 14%	3 of 19 14%
Brand names of filtering software	N2H3 Bess Cyber Patrol (3 institutions) Microsoft Proxy Server Smart Filter Surf Watch (2 institutions) Don't know (2 institutions)	WebSense Hedgebuilders Surf Watch	WebSense Don't know	Bess Cybersitter Don't know	Bess (Rated-G) Cyber Patrol Novell Border Manager

ware on the system. The library faculty felt bad because we weren't consulted. We could have given some insights on the pros and cons of filtering."

Many institutions have decided to restrict access to email, chat-rooms, and games, especially on computers in the library. Most libraries rely on an "acceptable use policy" in these cases, but enforcement falls upon the library staff. Some have decided not to enforce the policy "unless someone is waiting in line to use the computers in the lab for a reference purpose", or "when someone complains". Many campuses restrict games because of the great amount of bandwidth that is required to run them.

The majority (48%) of institutions with filters were satisfied. Most seemed to have an understanding of the procedures to unblock a legitimate site and most have a good working relationship with their system administrator and computer staff.

As Internet filters are imperfect at best, Christian librarians must understand the issues, understand the technology, and be willing to join in the campus decision-making process. If we choose to filter the Internet, we must also interact with vendors and demand improved filter performance. We must be active in writing and enforcing campus-wide "acceptable use" computer policies.

And we must never forget the ultimate truth as expressed by one librarian, "Transformed hearts are the best filters."

<sup>1</sup> Cate, Fred H. *The Internet and the First Amendment: Schools and sexually explicit expression*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1998. p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> American Library Association. *Resolution on the use of internet filters*. American Library Association, 1999. Online. Available: [http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/filt\\_res.html](http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/filt_res.html). 13 Nov 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Burt, David. *Filtering Facts*. Online. Available: <http://www.filteringfacts.org>. 29 Nov 1999.

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