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Association of Christian Librarians

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Celebrating the Past

Association of Christian Librarians

1957 – 1981

Have you known of an organization that has survived for 25 years without a salaried personnel, where no one has gone on strike for higher wages or overtime pay, or where no one has asked about retirement benefits or federal aid? Yet this organization has grown constantly, is regularly putting out two publications, never lacks for a place for an annual conference and has plenty of volunteer help from year to year. This is the CHRISTIAN LIBRARIANS' FELLOWSHIP now known as the ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN LIBRARIANS.

What is the answer for this success and survival? I believe Mr. Herbert Giesbrecht, the librarian of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Winnipeg, Canada, has the answer when he wrote in *The Christian Librarian* saying, "If the Christian faith makes any difference in life at all, it makes a difference here as well; Christian librarians can and ought to be amongst the most concerned, the most interested, and the most devoted librarians of all. And where librarianship is acknowledged as a calling of God – as it ought to be – there, something of the extra dimension which librarians can provide is realized." He adds, "I may add that the stimulation and encouragement to me personally is associated

with members of the CLF in the U.S. that has been real and provided confirmation of the fact."¹

When the founders of the organization drew up the statement for the purpose of the organizations which was to be a distinctive and unique group the statement read, "In order to bring greater honor to the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the CHRISTIAN LIBRARIANS' FELLOWSHIP proposes to bring its members into a deeper realization of their divine call to His service and by prayer, study, and working together over the distinctive problems of Christian librarianship make each library more useful to our Lord. Thus the Fellowship shall direct and carry on a program of activities to advance the standards of library service to Christian schools, the continual spiritual, professional and scholarly growth of those engaged in the work of these libraries."²

How well these goals have been realized is perhaps a matter of individual opinion by those who have been most involved. In *The Christian Librarian*, someone (I believe it was Mrs. Lenice Reed) wrote that the "Christian Librarians' Fellowship is most fortunate in that the librarians who envisioned this organization and initiated

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the first conference were people of professional stature and experience. Comparatively few errors were made in planning or procedure. Whenever any action was proposed it has been thought through carefully. From year to year a steady growth and expansion has been possible and logical since no very great reorganization has had to be undertaken. Professional stimulation and friendly fellowship truly distinguish its meetings, which are concerned with matters of substance and provide an opportunity for productive discussion.”³

Growth

Certainly there has been growth over the years. When the first meeting was held at Nyack in 1957, 17 people representing 13 schools were present. One year later 15 schools were represented by 19 librarians. Growth has continued as follows:

1960 At Buffalo, NY, 26 attended representing 19 schools and membership was up to 46.

1963 At Springfield, MO, 37 were in attendance.

1964 At Harrisonburg, VA, 40 attended from 16 states, D.C. and Canada.

1965 In North Chili, NY, 50 attended

1966 In Fort Wayne, IN, membership was up to 89 with 14 associate members.

1969 At Grand Rapids, MI, 70 attended and membership was up to 140.

1972 In Wilmore, KY, 120 attended and membership was up to 153.

1975-76 Membership had grown to 203.

1981 Current membership is more than 270.

By 1967, a new constitution was adopted for the organization with a few minor changes, and in 1972, the organization was incorporated. The goals were the same as listed in the old constitution but the organization operates under the *By-Laws* and the *Rules of Order*, and *Standing Rules* spell out the specific policies and procedures for each office, committee, and activity or project. Miss Ora Ann Sprague was asked to serve as first Executive Secretary in 1972 followed by Miss Marcelyn Smid who is serving at the present time.

Publications

At the very first meeting, a committee was appointed to work on considering an index to cover Christian periodicals; the very next year an editorial committee appointed volunteers to

index 17 periodicals. One year later the first issue of the *Christian Periodical Index* was published and sold for \$4.00 to members and \$5.00 to non-members. 125 copies were sold the first year. In 1961, the first five-year cumulation appeared covering the years 1956-1960. In the 1961-1965 cumulation book reviews were included and in 1966 at the suggestion of Dr. John Montgomery who was our conference speaker that year, author entries were added to the subject heading list. Today the CPI is still published with a volunteer staff of 38 indexing 66 periodicals. A useful list of subject headings is supplied to all indexers by the editorial committee. This is updated from time to time.

For 25 years *The Christian Librarian* has faithfully covered news of our meetings, carried professional articles, news of the organization and its members, and recorded the lectures given at the conferences. There have been discussions on various subjects, occasional book reviews, and bibliographies.

The *Library Manual for Missionaries* under the editorship of Mrs. Clara Ruth Stone and chapters by several members of the organization has been a useful tool for missionaries working overseas, who have faced the need to provide libraries to support their educational programs among national Christians. A Subject Heading Supplement is provided to accompany the manual.

Annual Conferences

The annual conferences have been the highlight of the year for many of us. Here we have experienced fellowship and the opportunity for sharing ideas, problems, and experiences. Someone has said, “‘Stimulating’ and ‘refreshing’ are hardly strong enough words to characterize what we have experienced in our fellowship during devotions, well prepared papers, and at the banquets.” Lasting friendships have been formed and we know of at least one romance that has blossomed into a marriage.

Early in 1959, Helen McLaren attending her first conference wrote in *The Christian Librarian*, “Although the delegates represented a variety of ages, types of training, and experience, much has been gained from sharing backgrounds. A delightful spirit of “teachability” lifted the CLF conference above the thousands of mediocre conferences attended by multitudes of American convention trotters.”⁴

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Almost ten years later Miriam Waggoner wrote in *The Christian Librarian*, "The summer conferences of the CHRISTIAN LIBRARIANS' FELLOWSHIP have produced many professional, personal and spiritual benefits for its members and friends. It has not only given us a better understanding of our profession but has provided encouragement in administering our libraries as we have talked with other librarians who have similar problems."⁵

It has been our privilege to hear outstanding scholars, authors, librarians, missionaries, teachers, and other professional people who have enlarged our scope of learning and stretched our imaginations in many areas, for as librarians we need to be knowledgeable in all aspects of learning. I think of Dr. John Montgomery who challenged us to publicize the work of evangelical scholars whose works are equal to those in the secular world but do not receive the publicity. It was he who urged us to make the *Christian Periodical Index* both a subject and author index.

Writers whose works we often refer to in our libraries include distinguished scholars such as Dr. Charles Pfeiffer, Dr. Charles Ryrie, Dr. James DeForest Murch, Dr. Edward Hayes, Dr. Sherwood Wirt, Dr. Joe Bayly, Mr. Elwyn Palmer, Malcolm Couch, Rev. John Millheim, James and Marti Hefly, and Grace Irwin.

I remember half heartedly hearing Dr. Walter Martin of Christian Research Institute make the prediction, "Well before 1980 computers will be small, powerful, and inexpensive. Computing power will be available to anyone who needs it or wants it or can use it. In many cases the user will have a small personal console connected to a large central computing facility where enormous electronic memories will store all aspects of knowledge. Corresponding developments in non-machine interaction will make it as easy to learn to use the new computers as it is to drive a car."⁶

For our professional learning and improvement we have discussed all kinds of subjects in workshops, buzz sessions, panels, round tables, dialogs, lectures. Subjects covered have been censorship, management, student assistants, Christian biography, Christian fiction, collection development, A.V. materials, administration, rare books, microfilm, reclassification, library buildings

and architecture, expansion, book clubs, book repair and classification schemes, budget, and staff, which we are coping with in our smaller libraries.

It has been our privilege to be some of the first visitors in our member libraries such as Roberts Wesleyan, Columbia Bible College, Grace College, and Covenant College.

Travel Benefits

Henry Martyn, the missionary scholar, made a statement which portrays the feelings of a librarian who delves into so many areas of life when he said, "Since I have known God in a saving manner, painting, poetry, and music have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose is a taste from them, or religion has refined my mind and made it susceptible of impressions from the sublime and the beautiful."

Enriching our interest in the arts, we have had opportunity to visit such places as the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, the Nelson Art Gallery in Kansas City, and the Cultural Center in Chicago. For special interest in the sciences we have visited the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base Museum in Dayton, Ohio.

Our hosts have planned some enriching experiences in familiarizing ourselves with the past. History has become alive as we have visited Fort Osage in Sibley, Kansas, built in 1808 by William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition as the first outpost of the Louisiana Purchase. At Fort Snelling in St. Paul, Minnesota, we saw pioneer life as it was lived in the early 19th century.

In 1975, the first European tour of libraries was conducted under the leadership of Mr. Delbert Gratz with visits to Luxemburg, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, and Belgium.

Opportunities have been provided at our conferences to enhance our library knowledge and skills through some very practical aspects. At the Vail-Ballou Manufacturers in Binghamton, New York, we saw the complete process of printing and putting a book together.

There is little question that my life probably would have been much different had it not been for ACL (Christian Librarians' Fellowship in 1972). I sat next to Wayne Woodward in a class at the University of Kentucky while doing my masters work. He worked at Asbury College and we became friends. In 1972, he sent me a note that ACL would be meeting at Asbury in June, 1973. Since Asbury is about 140 miles from my home in KY, I combined it with my annual visit with my folks. My wife and daughter stayed with my folks while I attended.

I was awed and amazed that there were other librarians at schools like mine grappling with the same problems. Besides my friend Wayne, I met Steve Brown, Jane Hopkins, Ruth Butler, Sarah Patterson, Lynn Brock and many others who became my friends and mentors. I attended workshops and sessions that helped me immensely. I was hooked on ACL from the first day.

At that conference, there were discussions of how AABC (Bible college accreditation) teams worked. I was very interested since we had just been through an accreditation visit. I became part of an ACL team whose mission was to get the AABC to put a librarian on each team. I was chosen to lead the team that made a presentation at the AABC conference in Chicago a year later. Because of that involvement I was chosen to become part of an AABC team visiting one of the schools in Texas. There I met Randy Bell, who later became the Executive Director of the AABC and Dr. Elmer Kirsch, Dean of Central Bible College in Springfield, Mo.

It was through Dr. Kirsch that I learned that there might be an opening at Evangel College (now, University.) I called the Dean there who it seemed was rather cool towards me during the interview until he finally asked how I knew about the opening. When I mentioned that I had worked with Dr. Kirsch on an accreditation team, the tenor of the conversation changed immediately. I was invited for a visit that summer and was hired on the spot. Maybe God has many paths that ultimately lead to finding His will, but my path was through ACL.

Beyond my coming to Evangel in 1976, ACL has provided me with an excellent network of librarians and chances for professional growth. I was shaped by my exposure to people like Bill Abernathy, Lynn Brock, Paul Snezk, Lois Luesing, John Whitmer, Nancy Olson, and others.

My network of friends in ACL has proven to be more like family than colleagues. When we needed comfort during my daughter's cancer and eventual passing, my ACL family stood with me. I received several hundred emails, cards, and letters from ACL members. I found in them the collective wisdom and caring of more than a hundred brothers and sisters in Christ. I have them in a basket on my fireplace. I still find comfort when I pull them out and re-read them. I often say that I bleed Kentucky Wildcat blue when cut, but a truer statement might be that I breathe and live ACL in my librarian life.

Woodvall Moore, Library Director, Evangel University

What ACL Means to Me.

At the Heckman Bindery in North Manchester, Indiana, we saw the repair and rebinding process, a necessary procedure in every library. We visited the headquarters of two large publishers and booksellers of religious books – Zondervan Publishing Company and Kregel's Bookstore in Grand Rapids – and had an opportunity to see the process of indexing periodicals at the H.W. Wilson Company, which provides us with many of our useful tools such as the *Readers Guide* and *Education Index* and many others. At Loizeaux Brothers Publishing House in Neptune, New Jersey, we enjoyed a delightful supper along with a tour. Very interesting and informative tours were provided for us at the Gospel Publishing House in Springfield, Missouri, the Wycliffe headquarters

outside of Dallas, the Bread of Life Broadcasts in Grand Rapids, the Billy Graham headquarters in Minneapolis, and the Navigators in Colorado Springs.

And, of course, we have visited libraries – large ones and small ones. In each of our own libraries we have discovered some new creative devices, some unusual publicity, or even some clever short-cut that has given us a helpful tip.

Among the famous libraries we have visited are the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., the library at the Texas Christian University with its very special rare book collection, the Grosvenor Library, a division of the Buffalo and Erie County Library system in Buffalo, the Hill Reference Library in St. Paul, the Newberry Library in Chicago, the National

Geographic Society Library in Washington, D.C., the Truman Library in Independence, Kansas, and of course the Library of Congress.

There was that memorable day when about 50 librarians on a tour of the scenic Colorado Rockies chose instead to visit the Air Force Academy Library and what a rewarding experience it proved to be when the head librarian not only conducted us on a personal tour but gave us insights into some of the familiar problems of space, budget, and personnel faced by each of us in our libraries.

I believe it has been our privilege to travel to some of the most scenic spots on the North American continent. Beginning with this beautiful spot here on the Hudson River 25 years ago, we have moved from East to West and North to South with each campus sharing its uniqueness that has left a lasting impression of hospitality, warmth, and fellowship and giving us an opportunity to view such places as the mighty Niagara at night, the magnificent view from the top of Lookout Mountain, home of Covenant College, the rolling Berkshire country, home of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, William Cullen Bryant and Jonathan Edwards. At Springfield, Missouri, we enjoyed the Ozark country and at Bryan College the spectacular mountains surrounding the campus. For many of us our first opportunity to walk along the Atlantic seaboard came at Ocean City, and in the Kentucky bluegrass country we had a visit into the past at Shakertown. In the beautiful Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, the battles of the Civil War reminded us of our heritage of freedom with a costly price, and in Columbia, South Carolina we saw the bullet-ridden capitol, a reminder of Sherman's famous (or infamous) march to the sea. We saw the past splendor of Monticello, home of Thomas Jefferson, and the modest home of former president Truman in Independence, Missouri. At the Lincoln Library and Museum in Fort Wayne, we relived the life of Abraham Lincoln. In Dayton, Tennessee, we saw the courthouse where the famous Scopes trial took place which decided that a young school teacher could not freely teach evolution.

Today the battle still rages over creationism/evolution as taught in the public schools.

Who can ever forget the grandeur of the mountain scenery that surrounded the Nazarene Bible College in Colorado Springs or the beauties of the early Minnesota summer at the St. Paul Bible College and Northwestern College?

For many of us it has been a first time visit to our large cities – New York, Chicago, Minneapolis, Washington, D.C., Kansas City, Fort Wayne and Dallas. In busy, bustling Chicago, right in the heart of the city, we found the quiet oasis of the Moody Bible Institute. What a testimony for a school that has stayed to minister to the needs of the inner city but has provided a quiet relaxed atmosphere for its students and personnel.

Fun Times

There have been the times of fun and fellowship. What memorable occasions have been the annual banquets which were started at Cedarville College in 1961. Who can forget that 10th anniversary banquet hosted by Lenice Reed when we lit a birthday cake and sang a song of remembrance for each year?

We have shared many slide presentations by our camera fans and traveling librarians and mementos such as Henrietta Watt's spoon collection. We have enjoyed many picnics as we have competed with ants and in some cases with rain at St. Paul Bible College, Bryan College, Washington Bible College and Covenant College. And what fun it was trying to drink coffee from a hot tin cup at the Flying W Ranch in Colorado Springs.

Can you still see a dignified group of librarians waving American flags at the Springfield, Missouri airport? No, we were not welcoming home some hostages but meeting a new U.S. citizen by the name of Dorothy Spidell as she transferred her allegiance to the U.S.A. from her Canadian citizenship.

Do you remember Paul Snezek come screaming down a slide at an amusement park in Grand Rapids or riding the Chattanooga Choo Choo with that loquacious conductor who could

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name almost any street car line in the United States?

There have been the times when six overfed librarians tried to squeeze into a small booth in a pizza parlor. Or the time when several bleary-eyed librarians spent several night-time hours on Winona Lake when their motor boat ran out of gas.

Remember when the program chairman arrived at the Grand Rapids conference in his only pair of shorts because he forgot his suitcase at home? Fortunately his resourceful wife knew about air freight.

There have been those dubious times when Ruth Butler and Oral Collins were assigned as roommates ... and can you see some of us jumping off a window sill to get to our upper decker beds?

The weather too has played a part in our activities. When a sudden hot, sultry day in June suddenly turned cold and the Cedarville faculty and staff came to our rescue with blankets and sweaters. And we survived two tornado alerts at Kansas City and another at Grand Rapids when about 50 librarians crowded into a small basement room in the library.

Spiritual

Last, but not least, have been the times of refreshing through His Word with one another, one of our chief reasons for existence as an organization. Devotions brought to us by Faculty members from our various schools and from servants of Jesus Christ involved in special ministries have provided us with encouragement from their experiences. In 1967, Richard Elmer, then a librarian at Fort Wayne Bible College, wrote in *The Christian Librarian*, "That a Christian is a servant of Jesus Christ goes without saying. That a servant of Christ is also a servant of the public in the form of inquiring students and faculty members – this constitutes a high calling, indeed a double responsibility."⁷ It is this calling that unites us in a common goal.

We have benefited from the times of sharing with one another as to how God has supplied in times of need for staff, for financial needs, provision for space, and expansion in our

libraries, for equipment and supplies and even new buildings for many of our members. There have been times when we have shared prayer burdens, frustrations that come in work, difficult situations, personnel and administrative changes.

There have been special times of praise and rejoicing such as Ruth Good's testimony as to how God literally led through deep waters at Toccoa Falls.

We have been blessed by the reports of friends who have shared overseas – among them Ruby Dare, Lois Luesing, Martha Myers, Susan Schultz, and Margaret Shenk. And we have been blessed by special devotions shared by members such as John Witmer's series on the leadership of Nehemiah.

We have sorrowed over the loss of librarian friends who have been with us and have now received a higher calling. Among them are Ruby Dare, Emily Russel, Edna Fuller, Elsie Oetken, George Manuel, Paul Wyland, Bob Marston, and most recently Mrs. Lenice Reed on April 10 of this last year.

We have rejoiced with those who have received recognition for Christian librarianship through the Emily Russel Award established in honor of one who contributed much in the way of inspiration and encouragement to the organization. Recipients have been as follows:

- 1974 Susan Schultz
- 1975 Miriam Waggoner
- 1976 Shirley Wood
- 1978 Ora Ann Sprague
- 1979 Dorothy Spidell
- 1981 Ruth Butler

I will not make any predictions for the next twenty-five years but I am glad to have been part of this organization for its first twenty-five. ✚

NOTES:

¹ *The Christian Librarian*, v. 9, January, 1966, p. 2

² *Ibid.* v. 3, Fall, 1959, p. 4

³ *Ibid.* v. 8, April, 1965, pp. 1-2

⁴ *Ibid.* v. 3, Fall, 1959, p. 2

⁵ *Ibid.* v. 11, December, 1967, p. 19

⁶ *Ibid.* v. 14, October, 1970, p. 3

⁷ *Ibid.* v. 11, December, 1967, p. 9