

# A Study of Church Libraries in Australia

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*Australia and the United States share many similarities, including British heritage, language, constitutional protection against state sponsored religion, and a predominately Christian population. This paper explores one outgrowth of our shared British heritage and religion, church libraries. The development of these unique libraries in each country is explored through a combination of approaches, including quantitative information and interviews. What are some of the characteristics of an Australian church library, and how are they similar or different from those in the U.S.? Library characteristics, such as collections, organization, and services provided are compared and contrasted to yield a picture of the current state of Australian church libraries.*

## Introduction and Historical Background

The connection between the church, clergy, and libraries has been present throughout all of history, as Thomas Kelly (1966:13) notes in *Early Public Libraries*. Therefore, it is to the institution of the Church that we look for the first libraries. Church libraries are arguably among the earliest types of public libraries, having roots in medieval monastic libraries, where books were chained in churches for the ecclesiastical use of clergy and students. Monastic collections were theological and scholarly works in Latin and Greek, and did not invite public use. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, literacy rates were increasing among laymen, yet books and libraries remained the monopoly of the clergy. A variety of factors combined during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, dramatically increasing the number and nature of church libraries. The demand for access to books was growing in proportion to the expanding publishing trade and increasing literacy rates. The church, however, remained a large part of everyday life, and it was to the church that the laity looked for literature.

The strong connections between church, clergy, and libraries can also be seen in England's North American colonies. Most colonial libraries belonged to ministers and consisted of both religious and utilitarian works. In fact, clergyman John Harvard donated the United States' oldest library in 1638 to a university, which today bears his name.

A few years later in 1696, English clergyman Thomas Bray was sent to the colonies for a parochial visitation on behalf of the Church of England. He reported on various congregations, noting that a Swedish congregation of Lutherans in Pennsylvania had a minister equipped with a library supplied by the Swedish

king. Duly impressed, Bray suggested an urgent need for trained ministers and proposed the “requisite to provide each of them with a *Library* of necessary Books, to be fix’d in those places to which they shall be sent, for the Use of them, and their Successors for ever.”<sup>1</sup> The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, an educational and publishing society founded by Bray and still operating today, was responsible for the frequent book shipments to colonial ministers and the subsequent establishment of seventy church-based libraries. As a result of these efforts, church libraries were the first free lending libraries in what was to become the United States.

Interest in church libraries waned after Bray’s death, but was inadvertently revived by Englishman Robert Raikes during the 1780’s. Concerned about children living in poverty, Raikes was determined to improve children’s lot through increased literacy and moral instruction. On Sundays, he began offering reading and writing instruction with the Bible as the main textbook. Thus, the Sunday school movement was born. The idea was exported to America where it became entangled with capitalism.

American Sunday schools wishing to entice attendees began offering incentives for participation. Books were originally granted to attendees as rewards for attendance, scripture memorization, or good behavior. Church officials recognized the recurring expense of this plan and conceived of the library as a solution; rather than award books, pupils would be rewarded the privilege of using the library (Briggs, 1961:166).

The church library movement in the United States continued to grow both in size and importance. As Stephen Rachman notes in his essay “Shaping the Values of Youth: Sunday School Books in 19<sup>th</sup> century America,” “...libraries were an important factor in the spread of these books. According to the American Sunday School Union, 17 percent of affiliated schools reported having libraries in 1826; by 1832, 75 percent reported having libraries.”<sup>2</sup> It was quickly realized that the Bible alone would not satisfy the growing reader’s demands and religious publishing was born in the form of tract societies and denominational based publishing houses, the latter producing a weekly periodical the Sunday school attendee could take home.

Professional librarians and even the U.S. government took notice of the burgeoning movement and began the first serious attempt to document the phenomena; further proof of the importance of church libraries. Frank Keller Walter’s (1942:736) article *A Poor but Respectable Relation—the Sunday school library* noted the opportunity to gather statistics on church libraries as early as 1851. Walter also cites the U.S. census of 1870, which reported 33,580 church-based libraries.

Articles on the topic continued to pour forth throughout the nineteenth century. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century these unique libraries were on the decline, due in no small part to the explosion of public libraries. Compulsory public education was an additional detriment to the religious libraries, since the libraries lost their primary sphere of influence, namely reading and writing instruction, to public schools. Conversely, it is theoretically possible

that the connection to education in the form of Catholic parish schools contributed to the survival of church libraries. Supporting this theory is the formation in 1921 of the first church library association, the Catholic Library Association, which was originally rooted in the National Catholic Education Association.

Not to be outdone, in 1927 the Southern Baptist Convention became the first Protestant denomination to organize a library association, The Sunday School Department of the Sunday School Board; the Department's cumbersome name was changed in 1943 to the Church Library Service. By 1945 the popularity and growth of church libraries was enough to warrant the first workshop organized specifically for church librarians. Today, numerous professional organizations, conferences, and publications characterize the U.S. church library movement.

By contrast, there are few reports on church library movements in other parts of the world. A 1986 article entitled "An Introductory World Survey of Popular Church and Synagogue Libraries," (Harvey, 1986: 347-372) attempts to identify these libraries throughout the world. The report provided brief, one to two paragraph descriptions of church libraries in sixty-three countries. Particularly intriguing was the entry for Australia, which noted only thirteen libraries. Why so few church libraries in such a large country, especially since Australia and the United States share many similarities? To answer these questions, a brief historical outline is needed.

The European discovery and settlement of Australia has many similarities with the United States. The Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch initially explored both countries, although American exploration occurred approximately a century before Australia's exploration. The English influence on both the U.S. and Australia is clearly present in the history of both countries; the first English settlement in the U.S. occurred in 1607, while Australia was claimed for England in 1770.

Before the American Revolution, Britain routinely shipped convicts to the colonies, but after the Revolution, Britain began sending the convicts to Australia. Both countries are roughly proportional in area. While the population of the U.S. is greater than Australia, the distribution between urban and rural areas is nearly identical. European ethnicity dominates both countries, and English is the dominant language. Significantly, the constitutions of Australia and America both forbid a state religion and guarantee religious freedom. Finally, Christianity is the principal religion.

Given the similarities between Britain, the United States, and Australia, the Sunday school library movement was successfully exported to both British colonies. A variety of factors combined to expedite the movement, including regular contact between the Crown and the colonies, a shared language, and a common religious heritage. The purpose of Australian Sunday school libraries was the same as those in Great Britain and the U.S. Despite being founded somewhat later, Australian Sunday schools were committed to basic education for the common man and, as a result of utilizing the Bible as the primary textbook, religious instruction was also imparted.

The first Sunday school was founded near Sydney by William Pascoe Crook in 1813. While it is unclear if a library was founded at this time, within two years the interdenominational New South Wales Sunday School Institute was formed and opened the Parramatta Sunday School complete with a library. The Institute formed several other schools, but denominational differences forced closures. Although the surviving schools were increasingly denominational and instruction exclusively religious, the libraries flourished. By 1858, the Wesleyans were operating 227 schools, the largest number of schools in Australia, and an 1872 proclamation called for each Sunday school to have a library (Clyde, 1986:175).

The success was short-lived. Like her counterparts in America, Australian parish libraries declined during the early twentieth century. The availability of public education and public libraries robbed the Sunday school libraries of both purpose and pupil, so that by 1931 the Wesleyans were no longer providing library statistics at their annual conference. In "Sunday School Libraries in Eastern Australia: the Wesleyan experience," Dr. L.A. Clyde (1986:181-182) posited a number of additional reasons for the demise of these unique libraries, including difficulty of finding volunteer librarians, decreasing financial support, and possible attitudinal changes within the Church. Perhaps the rise of theological college libraries, Australia's reliance upon U.K. based publishers or the slow development of local religious publishing houses were also factors.

Church libraries probably had a sporadic existence over the next several decades, appearing in various congregations, perhaps taking root, perhaps failing after several years. Unlike in the U.S. no denomination stepped forward to organize their libraries, nor did any ecumenical group, until the last decade of the twentieth century. Margaret Stiller, a church librarian in South Australia, conceived of the Australian Church Library Association (ACLA) and in 1990 convened a group of interested persons in Adelaide. The late Ms. Stiller firmly believed in "promoting the Christian faith through church libraries" and "in the ensuing years she toured Australia encouraging individual church librarians in the growth of their own libraries as well as in networking within various Australian states."<sup>3</sup> ACLA has four state chapters, members in every state and overseas, issues a quarterly newsletter, maintains a web site, and sponsors a biennial conference.

Why did Australia and America, two countries with many similarities, develop church libraries along different timelines? What are some of the characteristics of an Australian library, and how are they similar or different from those in the U.S.? This study intends to address each of these questions through a combination of approaches, including quantitative information on the current state of these libraries. Historical development is considered in the context of current library characteristics, including collections; services provided by, and services provide to, these special organizations.

## Definitions and Scope

Defining the term 'church library' is the first task. Church libraries are not to be confused with theological libraries. Theological libraries are associated with an institute of higher learning and intended for theological students and faculty members. The collections of a theological library support an institute's curriculum and are often academic in nature.

By contrast, church libraries are rooted in individual congregations; so closely are church libraries tied to congregations that early libraries were called Sunday school libraries. The term 'Sunday school library' referred to any collection of books, regardless of their organization or lack thereof, located in a house of worship and intended for use by those associated with the school. As time progressed, collections grew, materials intended for adults appeared, and the Sunday school library began to require formal oversight and organization. The appearance of adult materials and the need for formal organization and oversight marked the point at which a Sunday school library ceased and a church library began.

Some features of a church library have already been noted, such as location, client base, oversight, and organization, yet a more formal definition is needed. This study utilizes a modified form of John Harvey's (1980:vii) definition as posited in *Church and Synagogue Libraries*:

A church or synagogue library provides reading material and library service to members of a specific church or synagogue, usually in connection with their religious activities. A library is defined here as one or more rooms containing a collection of print and/or non-print material organized for use.... In addition, the phrase "congregational library" refers to a church or synagogue library.

Harvey (1999:681) also details the characteristics of such a library:

To become a library, the collection should (1) be organized in a logical order, e.g., by author or subject, (2) have an appointed supervisor, librarian, or committee, (3) actively provide circulation, processing and reference service, (4) contain at least 100 volumes of library material, (5) be established in a dedicated room, space or other quarters with stack shelving, (6) have a recognized and clearly defined user group or clientele, (7) have a functional organization plan and set of objectives, and preferably (8) be supported with an annual income from the sponsoring institution.

While many parishes may own a collection of books and other materials, these may not meet the aforementioned standards. For example, the libraries in the Australian sample often shared space and rarely had a formal organization plan. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, a church library will include any library residing within a building used for worship and meeting; that is at least the first four of Harvey's criteria. Finally, the terms congregational library, parish library, parochial library, religious library, and church library are used synonymously.

Additionally, this study focuses on libraries within mainstream Protestant denominations. Protestantism is the dominant Australian faith. First, 68 percent of Australians identify themselves as Christian, according to the 2001 Australian census. Break downs of the Protestant populations include: 20.7 percent Anglican; Presbyterian/Reformed 3.4 percent; Orthodox 2.8 percent; Baptists, Lutherans, and Pentecostals each slightly under 2 percent; other Christian faiths 2.7 percent, and the Uniting Church, formed by a merger of Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, accounts for 6.7 percent. A remaining 26.6 percent attend Catholic services (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

## Literature Review

Church library literature is abundant with informative monographs and articles. The topic is interdisciplinary in nature, encompassing the literature of religion, history, and librarianship. Subject headings are numerous and vary according to each discipline's literature and indexing practices. A sampling of related Library of Congress subject headings includes: church libraries, Christian libraries, Christian education, church history, and church work, to name just a few. The most accurate heading, church libraries, was searched in *OCLC Worldcat* and yielded 507 English-language titles, which included 447 books, twenty-seven serials, fourteen sound recordings, ten visual items, six archival titles, two articles, and one Internet site. The search results spanned three centuries, the oldest title attributed to Thomas Bray in 1697, while the newest work was published in 2002.

A future study of subject headings and publication dates would be helpful in determining subject heading usage, publishing, publisher, and authorship patterns, however in lieu of such a study some generalizations are possible. Older items tended to be book catalogs associated with specific libraries, while handbooks, manuals, how-to guides, and directories published by church library associations comprised many of the contemporary publications. Nevertheless, two definitive texts, both by John Harvey (1980; 1999), were identified: *Church and Synagogue Libraries* and *Popular Religious Libraries in North America: a statistical examination*.

The literature of religion contained few articles on the topic. Twelve English language articles appeared in the *ATLA Religion Index* (1949-2002) using the subject descriptor "church libraries." Results were equally disappointing in Australian religious literature. The *Australasian Religion Index*, published since 1989 by the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association, produced only one relevant article.

*Historical Abstracts* and *American History and Life* were the primary indexes consulted for the historical literature. A keyword search using "church" and truncating "library\*" produced 61 results. An examination of the subject headings in these results did not identify a precise subject heading relevant to the topic at hand, thus further keyword searches were necessary. A keyword search truncating "congregation\*" and "librar\*" produced four results, while "parish

librar\*” added three more results for a total of 68 items. The oldest article appeared in 1955 while the most recent was published in 1999.

Initially the quantity of results was encouraging however, upon further analysis the results were primarily concerned with the religious collections of specific libraries, denominations, and associations. Nearly 40 percent of the results related to the United Kingdom, 28 percent the United States, while Australia occurred in three articles, or less than one percent of the results. All of the articles about Australia provided useful background information; the most informative concerned the work of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

The literature of library science is peppered with information about church libraries. Consultation of *Library Literature* (1984-present) and *LISA* (1969-present) began with the keyword search strategies previously noted. Not surprisingly, both databases contained the precise subject heading “church libraries.” Searches limited to the subject heading revealed 68 and 70 articles respectively.

Unlike the searches in library indexes, *Information Science Abstracts* (1966-present) did not provide an explicit subject heading for church libraries, thus keyword searches were conducted. Utilizing the strategy ‘church and (library or libraries)’ yielded eleven entries.

Among the library and information science indexes, the earliest article appeared in 1960, while the most recent article was published in 2000. Chronological arrangement reveals 1980 as the peak publishing period, with eleven entries, six of which were chapters in Harvey’s (1980) *Church and Synagogue Libraries*.

Where a country could be identified from the subject headings and duplications removed, the United Kingdom dominated the results with thirty-three articles, including Ireland and Wales. The United States occurred in nine items, Australia in five entries, while other areas included: Italy, Israel, Canada, Belgium, Barbados, South Africa, Greece, Uruguay, Hong Kong, and West Germany.

A keyword search in *ALISA (Australian Library Information Science Abstracts)* using ‘church’ and truncating ‘librar\*’ produced only three results, none of which fit the definition of church libraries. Analyzing subject headings led to searching ‘theological libraries,’ resulting in 75 articles; again these articles did not fit the definition. Two relevant articles, both by Laurel Clyde, were located with the term ‘Sunday school libraries.’

In conclusion, the study of religious libraries is worldwide and the church library researcher will find many publications by and about church libraries. The searches further illustrate the scant availability of research on church libraries in Australia, and the complete lack of literature attempting comparisons between the United States and Australia. This lack of articles is interesting given a shared language and similar historical roots.

## Methodology

A survey was devised and distributed to attendees at the Church and Synagogue Library Association (June 2001, Atlanta, Georgia) and the Evangelical Church Library Association Conferences (October 2001, Wheaton, Illinois.) The results provided preliminary data for constructing and testing a simple statistical database in *Microsoft Access*.

Identifying a survey population was the first goal however this was not easily accomplished because the exact extent of church libraries is unknown. For example, if membership in a church library organization is indicative of the presence of a library, then there are approximately 4,025 libraries in the United States.<sup>4</sup> In Australia, the comparative figure would be 111. Since membership in an organization is optional, it is likely more libraries exist in both countries than are represented by membership figures.

Examining the number of churches may provide another means of locating libraries. In the U.S., there are 320,827 churches (National Council of the Churches of Christ, 2001:357). If each of these churches had a library, there would be two times more church libraries than all the public, academic, school, special, government, and armed forces libraries combined. If every Christian worship location in Australia had a library, there would be approximately 15,154 potential new ACLA members (Bentley and Hughes, 1998:120.) With the exception of those libraries belonging to a church library organization, there are only estimates as to the number of libraries in the U.S and in Australia.

Distributing the survey at the ACLA conference (October 2002) negated the difficult task of identifying a sample population and guaranteed a relevant result, however the method had some drawbacks. Those respondents had to be in a particular location at a selected time, limiting responses to only those who had the time, money, or inclination to attend the conference. According to Natalie Schwarz, immediate past president of ACLA, attendance at the 2002 biennial Conference was down 29 percent from the previous conference and represented only 24.5 percent of total ACLA membership.<sup>5</sup>

Location based canvassing also produced a geographically and denominationally skewed result. In an attempt to overcome these issues, personal visits and interviews were conducted and forty additional surveys were sent via mail. These efforts successfully enhanced geographical and denominational diversity.

In retrospect, the survey instrument contained some flaws, including brevity and American terminology. Concerned about possible negative reactions to a lengthy or complicated survey, the resulting questionnaire was kept to a single sheet of paper. Many questions were didactic and could be answered simply by checking the appropriate box. Other questions required ranking no more than five items or inserting statistical data. In at least one question, the use of the word "patron" may have been interpreted as a financial donor, rather than the library user typically designated in American library terminology. Although the feedback form



closely resembled previous church library surveys, supplemental questions were needed to gather information that is more detailed.

The interview questions were posited only to libraries visited, thus the sample is quite small. While these efforts obtained forty-six surveys, thirty-three more than the worldwide survey of 1986, the results cannot be compared because the worldwide survey attempted to locate libraries, while the current effort was concerned with the characteristics of known libraries, namely those belonging to the ACLA.

## **Results and Comparison**

The results provide a broad picture of Australian church libraries. The extent to which the respondents were typical of the larger ACLA membership is unknown, but elements, such as collections, acquisitions, technical services, and administration, are compared wherever possible to U.S. libraries. Claudia Hannaford derived figures for the U.S. from the 1985-86 Church and Synagogue Library Association (CSLA) survey. John Harvey, who published his findings in *Popular Religious Libraries in North America: a Statistical Survey*, subsequently analyzed this internal survey. Hannaford's work, though somewhat dated, is the preferred comparative tool because of similar methodology to the present study--both utilized questionnaires to examine the membership of a particular library association. Membership response rate in the 1985 was 22 percent, as opposed to 40 percent in the present effort.

### *A. Demographics*

Beginning with the seemingly simple task of where Australian church libraries are located, Harvey (1999:53) asserts a correlation between geographic density and library density. Applying this assertion in Australia suggests the state of New South Wales (NSW) should have the greatest concentration of libraries. Survey results, however, demonstrated that Victoria accounted for 30 percent of responses, slightly more than NSW's 27.5 percent. In this light, Victorian supremacy is marginally remarkable, but probably attributable to location based canvassing.

Unfortunately, neither the theory nor the survey finding can be supported by ACLA membership figures. In October 2001, South Australia (S.A.), the nation's fourth largest state, was home to 44 percent of ACLA members. The remainder of the membership can be divided as follows:

Australian Capital Territory	2.7 %
New South Wales	13.5 %
Northern Territory	1.8 %
Queensland	9.9 %
Tasmania	2.9 %
Victoria	20.7 %
Western Australia	2.7 %
Overseas	1.8 %

Perhaps the S.A. finding is attributable to a bit of history, since ACLA's founder was from the region.

Denominational representation is closely related to location. In the U.S. based survey, Harvey (1999:53) claimed "denominational churches [were] usually located in places of high general population density as well as in areas of strong denominational support." Based on this claim certain denominations would be expected to have more worship locations and therefore more libraries in selected areas. For example, in the U.S. Lutherans are concentrated in the Midwest and it is here that Lutheran libraries dominate (Harvey, 1999:413). Since most respondents were from Victoria, where the 16.5 percent of the population is Anglican (Hughes, 1997:70), the survey should have demonstrated a concentration of Anglican libraries. Rather the Uniting Church (UC) comprised 58.3 percent of the Victorian responses, Lutherans 16.6 percent, and Anglican, Baptist, and Church of Christ each contributed 8.3 percent.

Given similar population distributions in the U.S. and Australia, Harvey's denominational density claim should have been applicable. The fact that the Australian finding contradicts Harvey and U.S. findings is significant and perhaps indicative of a difference between U.S. and Australian church libraries, although population density may explain this finding.

Since library development requires time, money, and staff, larger denominations possessing these qualities should be more likely to have libraries. If this were the case in Australia, Anglicans would once again be expected to have the most libraries. However, this theory is not supported by the data, which showed 35.5 percent of libraries belonged to the Uniting Church, although the Church accounts for only 6.7 percent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003) of the general population. Other responses can be correlated to population figures as follows:

**Figure 1**

	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Total Population*</b>
Uniting Church	35.5 %	6.7 %
Lutheran	13.3 %	1.3 %
Anglican	13.3 %	20.7 %
Baptist	15.5 %	1.6 %
Catholic	8.8 %	26.6 %
Church of Christ	4.4 %	0.3 %
All others	8.8 %	

\*(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003)

ACLA membership numbers further supports UC library dominance. ACLA does not solicit denominational affiliation; however, insofar as religious relationship can be identified from the name of a church library the Uniting Church leads the way. Additional evidence from the *National Survey on Christian Education in the Uniting Church* (Hughes and Bond, 2000:42) indicates 60 percent of churches had some form of library. This somewhat encouraging sign is tempered by the fact that 34 percent had no church library and “it would appear that only in one quarter of the churches is [the library] well developed and well used.”<sup>6</sup> Possible explanations for UC library supremacy include philosophical beliefs on reading in relation to personal Christian growth, educational attainment and literacy rates among members, or financial support.

The Australian survey seems to suggest that denominational size does not influence the presence of libraries. Is there any correlation between congregational size and library occurrence? In Hannaford’s data, three size ranges were applied to congregations: 0-500 members, 501-1,000, and 1,001+. The results showed 38 percent of U.S. libraries were located in congregations with 0-500 members, 27 percent in the middle range, 33 percent in the upper range, with a mean membership of 1,138 (Harvey, 1999:506). U.S. church libraries occur in congregations of all sizes and with similar frequency regardless of congregational size.

Applying the same ranges to the Australian survey demonstrated that 85.7 percent of libraries were in congregations with 0-500 members, 9.5 percent in the mid-range and 4.7 percent had 1001+ members. The typical respondent’s congregation had 483 members, the largest 5000 members and the smallest 13 members. The concentration of libraries within the smallest congregations contradicts the U.S. finding and seems to imply that smaller churches are more likely to have libraries. However, these results are somewhat misleading.

Using Hannaford’s three size ranges skewed the results and was problematic for a number of reasons. The membership ranges in the CSLA survey were too broad for adequate comparison, particularly since the mean size of an Australian Protestant congregation is 69 members (Kalder, 1999:26). Clearly smaller congregations predominate and it was only logical that the majority of Australian respondents would fall within the CSLA survey’s smallest range. To obtain a truly comparable result, the percentage size distributions from Hannaford’s study were applied to the present sample, resulting in three categories. The results, as indicated below, further demonstrate the disparity between Australian and U.S. congregation size.

**Figure 2**

Membership Size	Percent of Respondents
0-200	38 %
201-350	27 %
351+	33 %

Ninety-seven percent of the sample had congregations seven times larger than the average Australian congregation, indicating a possible correlation between congregation size and library existence—the larger the congregation, the more likely a library was present. Respondent's interpretation of the question may have contributed to this result. For example, some may have entered the number of members officially belonging to a congregation versus those actually in attendance. It is impossible to know how respondents' interpretations affected the results and is indicative of the need to clarify the matter in future questionnaires.

### *B. Administration*

Future surveys should also gather information about those who administer church libraries. Harvey lamented the dearth of data about library personnel, although the CSLA addressed gender, and professional status. The gender data indicated 93 percent of church librarians were female, and 54 percent of libraries employed one or more professional librarians (Harvey, 1999: 513-514). The high percentage of libraries benefiting from professional assistance was encouraging. Can the same be said of Australian librarians?

Believing Hannaford correct with regard to gender, the Australian inquiry omitted this issue. Additionally, the professionalism matter was divided into two questions because it is possible to work in a non-church library without pursuing formal library education. Australian librarians conformed closely to Hannaford's observations with 66.6 percent possessing library experience, 44.4 percent exposure to formal library coursework, and 42.2 percent reporting both experience and education. Only 31.1 percent reported neither experience nor education. Clearly, Australian libraries are also benefiting from professional assistance.

Policies and procedures are an important part of administration, providing operational continuity for staff and guidelines for library users. Forty percent of Australian parish library patrons could expect to have their circulation privileges outlined in a policy and, if they wished to know why an item was discarded, 28 percent of libraries could justify their discards with a written policy. Should a librarian be approached about accepting donations, 22 percent could produce a donation policy and 26 percent had a collection development document. Despite the survey's finding that 24 percent of libraries experienced challenges to materials, a mere 15 percent had developed a policy on the matter. How does this compare to American libraries? Unfortunately, Hannaford did not question her sample about policies.

### *C. Acquisitions and Finance*

Professional experience and education are indeed helpful, though not necessary, in the fulfillment of many library duties. Acquiring material is one such instance. Hannaford did not solicit information vis-à-vis acquisitions methods or resources. The present survey attempted to determine what resources were used to identify potential purchases. Respondents were asked to rank their use of five items and provide the titles of corresponding resources. Publisher and bookstore catalogs ranked first among consulted resources, followed by user recommendations and religious magazines. The totals are expressed as follows:

Figure 3

	Ranked 1 <sup>st</sup>	Ranked 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ranked 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Ranked 4 <sup>th</sup>	Ranked 5 <sup>th</sup>	Ranked 6 <sup>th</sup> or no answer
Catalogs	31 %	11 %	15 %	11 %	2 %	28 %
Religious Magazines	20 %	15 %	15 %	8 %	4 %	35 %
Patron Recommendation	24 %	35 %	13 %	4 %	2 %	20 %
Non-religious magazines	2 %	2 %	4 %	17 %	13 %	60 %
Web sites	4 %	2 %	4 %	6 %	13 %	68 %

Among catalogs, Koorong's was utilized by 42 percent of librarians followed by Word (24 percent) and Open Book (17 percent). The ACLA newsletter was named by 15 percent of respondents and the catalogs and magazines of the Uniting Church were mentioned by 11 percent of the sample. Catalogs from Scripture Union, Eerdmans, Harvest, Family Reading, Bethany, and Willow were also mentioned. One library relied solely upon the Lutheran Faith at Home program, acquiring books in a manner similar to an approval plan.

Non-religious magazines and web sites were very unpopular. Anticipating low Internet use, the survey attempted to identify reasons for not using this particular tool. Small acquisitions budgets and reliance upon donations were barriers to Net consultation, but the most common answer for not using the Internet was lack of access. The lack of Internet use is somewhat surprising since 44 percent of the total population, or 8.42 million Australians, were Internet users. (*Statesman's Yearbook*, 2002:183).

A library's budget has a direct impact on acquisition power. Financial data is always difficult to compare due to inflationary fluctuations and exchange rates. Further hampering this effort are different approaches to gathering financial data. The Australian survey simply requested a budget figure, while Hannaford provided information related to income and sources thereof--not quite the same as a budget.

Keeping these caveats in mind, the CSLA survey reported a mean annual income of \$1,651 U.S.D. (Harvey, 1999:545.) The mean expenditure on books was \$942 U.S.D. and media \$215 U.S.D. (Harvey, 1999:557-558) for a combined mean materials expenditure of \$1,157 U.S.D. In effect, church librarians used 70 percent of their total budgets on acquisitions. The high budget to acquisitions ratio is not surprising because, as Harvey (1999:441) observed, "whatever the library's income, most of it can be spent for library materials...."

The Australian financial picture was not comparable to the U.S. The typical library had a \$520 AU.D. budget, with 28 percent lacking any formal budget. The most fortunate library had \$7,000 AU.D. Thus, the average Australian library budget was two times smaller than a U.S. budget, not allowing for inflationary increases since 1985. The Australian survey assumed Harvey was correct regarding

the budget acquisitions ratio and did not request a breakdown of expenditures. However, if Australian librarians had the same budget to acquisitions ratio as those in Hannaford's study, the mean Australian materials expenditure would be \$364 AU.D.

Expressing the acquisitions budget in terms of dollars per congregation member provided an interesting comparison. As previously illustrated, U.S. churches were larger and had larger budgets however Australian churches spent more per member on their acquisitions. The average U.S. library had 1,138 members and expended \$0.80 U.S.D. per member. In comparison an Australian church had fewer members, 483, but spent \$1.89 AU.D. per member. On the surface, this finding was encouraging; however, the price of a book in each country must be factored into the equation for an adequate result. The average retail book price of a book sold in Australia was \$22 AU.D., (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000-2001:1371.0) while the U.S. price for an adult trade book in was \$10 (Book Industry Study Group, 2001:20,23.<sup>7</sup>) Although it appears Australians spend more per member, their buying power is compromised by higher book prices, no doubt due in part to importation fees.

#### *D. Collections and Organization*

Despite the dismal financial picture for Australian libraries, the size of collections was partially comparable to U.S. libraries. The 1985 survey indicated a mean ownership of 2,824 book volumes (Harvey, 1999:518), or 2.3 books per congregation member. Although the typical Australian library had 1,415 books, nearly 50 percent smaller than in a U.S. library, the smaller Australian congregation size resulted in a comparable 2.9 books per congregation member.

An essential difference concerned the minimum and maximum volumes, which Hannaford recorded at 1,841 and 4,287 (Harvey, 1999:518). The smallest Australian library owned 200 volumes, while the maximum was 8,000 volumes. Clearly, the largest Australian libraries were comparable to their U.S. counterparts, but the comparison was not evident at the minimum end of the scale, where the smallest Australian libraries were four times smaller than the smallest United States libraries. This discrepancy may be related to funding, acquisitions methods, or the relatively contemporary nature of most Australian libraries.

Statistics regarding media holdings were also collected. Many congregational libraries collect some media material, even if limited to recordings of Sunday sermons. Such was the case in Australia, where 89 percent of libraries reported holding cassettes and/or compact discs. The average library held 161 titles; one library held 800 items and two libraries indicated no holdings. Video holdings were nearly identical, although all respondents reported owning such items. The maximum holdings numbered 1,000, while the minimum held only two videos. Hannaford's questionnaire inquired about cassettes, filmstrips, recordings, and videotapes, as well as several other items for a mean of 359 items (Harvey, 1999:528). Combining the Australian means for cassette/cds and videos yields a total mean of 352, clearly comparable to Hannaford's study despite her broader media definition.

Libraries were also asked if materials related to their congregations' histories were collected and to indicate other types of materials owned. Fifty percent retained items of congregational history, while 27 percent collected such unique materials as puzzles, posters, flannel boards, and games. Two libraries also noted bilingual books in German and Chinese. The presence of bilingual materials is interesting and deserves future exploration.

How were these collections organized? The Dewey Decimal classification system was utilized by 81 percent of Hannaford's respondents, while 11 percent used a locally designed system (Harvey, 1999:565.. Australian librarians demonstrated a similar fondness for Dewey, with 66 percent making use of the system, although 16 percent indicated modifying it by shortening the numbers or supplementing with color-coding. Locally created classification schemes were popular among 22 percent of those surveyed, again similar to American libraries. Examples include a subject arrangement for nonfiction, fiction arranged by accession number supplemented with a decimal to indicate copy number, color coding nonfiction, and arranging fiction alphabetically by author. Finally, a library indicated using a numerical system based upon a local school library's classification. Not surprisingly, there were no users of LC call numbers.

There was little evidence of church libraries using professionally created subject heading tools, such as Sears or Library of Congress (LC), however 22 percent used such tools. Surprisingly LC users accounted for seventeen percent of responses, unusual given the small size of Australian libraries and the U.S. biased subjects. Sears subject headings were used by five percent of the sample. Locally created headings were utilized by 38 percent of Australian libraries and a school library was once again used as a model. An uncomfortably large proportion of respondents, 44 percent, indicated no subject headings use or did not answer the question.

Only two percent of Hannaford's users reported LC usage and less than one percent used Sears headings (Harvey, 1999:565). These unusually low numbers are probably attributable to the construction of Hannaford's survey, which did not separate the issue of classification and subject headings hence comparison to Australian libraries on this matter is difficult.

The use or lack thereof of professional library tools may be attributable to librarian educational or experience level. Is there a correlation between professional experience/education and use of professional tools? The answer would seem to be "yes" with 55 percent of Dewey users indicating either professional job experience or education. Conversely, between the 27 percent lacking formal experience and education, the use of professional library tools was equally divided, with 50 percent using Dewey and 50 percent utilizing a locally created system.

#### *E. Library Access and Use*

Collection organization is central to effective library operation but becomes irrelevant if collections are not physically available. Hours of operation and methods for identifying items in collections influence library accessibility and

utilization. How church libraries approach each of these issues will now be explored.

Due to their location within a house of worship, church libraries often have unique operational hours. Hours may depend on staffing patterns, location within the church, times when the church office is open, or service philosophy, but it is clear that a number of operational patterns may exist. For example, a library may open only on days of worship or other activities, only when a staff member is available, or may be self-service any time the church is open. On this matter, the U.S. survey combined the questions related to hours with those concerning staffing, resulting in three categories: self-service whenever the building is open, staffed part-time with self-service other times, and always staffed when open. The combination of staffing and self-service was the most popular, garnering 58 percent of the responses, followed by self-service whenever the building is open, 35 percent. The remainder always staffed their libraries when opened (Harvey, 1999:567.)

Questions on the Australian survey did not combine staffing and hours but still contained three possible answers: open whenever the church is open, open only on days of worship, and a request to indicate other hours. Sixty-one percent were available any time the building was open and 33 percent opened only on days of worship; the remainder either did not answer the question or indicated other times of operation. Staffing patterns can be inferred from these answers. In the absence of a large library committee, it is unlikely the library was staffed whenever the building was opened, thus it is possible that the Australian libraries were staffed part-time and were self-service at other times. Assuming the inference correct, the Australian majority conformed to the U.S. findings, yet dissimilarities between the CSLA and Australian questions prevent conclusive comparison on this matter.

When a library was open, what tools were available to locate items within collections? Hannaford's survey pre-dates the explosion of affordable home computers and library software; therefore card catalogs were the primary tool for locating collection items. The average U.S. library had 4.9 catalogs consisting of, in descending order of occurrence, shelf list, author, title, non-book material, accession record, and subject (Harvey, 1999:565.) By contrast, the present survey attempted to determine the prevalence of card versus electronic catalogs. Like their U.S. counterparts, Australian libraries preferred card catalogs, with 61 percent indicating their use. Utilization of more than one catalog type, including book catalogs (17 percent), suggested the possibility that 22 percent of libraries were in transition from one type of catalog to another type. Finally, nine percent had no catalog.

In an encouraging development, one-third<sup>8</sup> had online catalogs. In an attempt to identify prevalent programs and how they were used, the names of software programs were also gathered. Most were home-grown systems employing database and spreadsheet type programs, specifically Microsoft's *Access* and *Excel*, *Dbase*, and *Lotus*, while two libraries, both quite large, had the commercially produced products *Alice for Windows* (AFW) and *Inmagic*. Creating a printed book catalog



arranged by title keyword was one use of software. Author/title lists, printing labels, and assigning accession numbers were also common software uses. The *Inmagic* and *AFW* users were the only libraries indicating automated circulation functions. Computers were rarely used to maintain web pages. While 48 percent of the churches had a web page, only six percent of the libraries reported an Internet presence.

Automation is one measure of library success and circulation statistics are another indicator of library effectiveness. To arrive at a mean circulation figure for U.S. congregational libraries Hannaford's numbers required some adjusting. The monthly mean circulation for all Protestant congregations was 112, which, when multiplied for 12 months and divided by 52 weeks, results in a mean weekly circulation of 26 items (Harvey, 1999:571.) The Australian mean was comparable with 33 items circulated during an average week.

## **Conclusion**

The statistical analysis of Australian church libraries showed many similarities, as well as a number of notable differences with U.S. libraries. On demographic matters, there was little comparison between the two countries. Not surprisingly, the more sparsely populated Australia had fewer churches and libraries and smaller congregations. While congregation size did not appear to influence the presence of a library in the United States, it was a significant factor in Australia.

By contrast, the libraries in both countries were similarly administered and both benefited from librarians with professional experience and/or education. A future Australian study should examine the prevalence of library committees and their composition in terms of gender, age, and professional status. In the United States, a survey of policies would be useful.

Budgets problems are common among libraries, but church libraries are particularly crippled by poor funding. Australian libraries suffered greater financial distress than their U.S. counterparts, including smaller budgets and higher book prices. Detailed information regarding the acquisition methods used by U.S. libraries is needed.

Collections were similar in terms of books per congregation member. Although U.S. book collections tended to be twice the size of Australian collections, Australians had comparably sized media collections. Libraries in both countries reported gathering local congregational history however further investigation is required to define the types and amount of material amassed. Deeper investigation into the availability of bilingual materials would also be welcome.

Both countries demonstrated a clear preference for Dewey classification and printed catalogs. Australian librarians appear to use professionally developed subject headings more frequently than their U.S. counterparts, although additional study on U.S. church libraries is required to clarify the issue. A slow trend toward automation was evident in both countries, although the U.S. data needs updating.

The impact and use of the Internet on church libraries in both countries deserves further exploration as well.

Libraries in each country had similar hours of operation and staffing patterns, clearly favoring self-service during all the hours a church was open. Finally, it is clear that church libraries are benefiting from staff with formal library experience and education.

The combination of Hannaford's and the present study show that church libraries continue to serve a unique purpose and audience. While comparisons can be interesting and helpful, the real value of church library studies lies in our increased understanding of these unique institutions, their contributions to librarianship, and to religious life.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Bray, Thomas. 1700. *A Memorial Representing the Present State of Religion on the Continent of North-America*. Internet Site: <http://www.mun.ca/recls/ang/texts/bray.html> (24/03/2003).

<sup>2</sup> Rachman, Stephen. *Shaping the Values of Youth: Sunday School Books in 19<sup>th</sup> century America*. Internet Site: <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/ssb/about.cfm?id=essay> (24/03/2003).

<sup>3</sup> Australian Church Library Association. *Who We Are*. Internet Site: [http://www.acla.asn.au/who\\_we\\_are.htm](http://www.acla.asn.au/who_we_are.htm) (24/03/2003).

<sup>4</sup> Combined memberships of Evangelical Church Library Association, Lutheran Church Library Association, and the Church and Synagogue Library Association.

<sup>5</sup> Schwarz, Natalie. Email of December 16, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Hughes, Philip. Email of October 1, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Figure was determined by dividing the estimated number of units for the year 2000 with estimated net dollar sales.

<sup>8</sup> Numbers do not add up to 100 percent because of those indicating more than one type of catalog.

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