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HELP! They just made me the Religion Librarian... and I'm only spiritual

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In many libraries, librarians are assigned subject responsibilities for areas in which they are not experts, and may not even be conversant. One of these areas is religion or its academic disciplines, theology and religious studies. This area generates more than eight thousand bachelor's and more than seven thousand master's degrees annually in the United States.[1] Still, the average American gets overall low marks in religious knowledge, with atheists and agnostics tending to score higher than the average committed Protestant or Catholic Christian in a recent survey.[2] So, for the new or newly-assigned religion librarian, knowledge of the subject may be an area of some anxiety, which this article is meant to address. My ninety-year-old father, in his wisdom, tells me that experience is the best teacher. This article, therefore, is not based on specific research, but on my experiences over the years, just one person's advice to the perplexed. The experienced librarian can skim the dialogue for something of interest or, it is hoped, confirmation; but for those to whom it all looks overwhelming, I hope that the text of the dialog, and some of my learning experiences will be helpful. [Note: the appendices give further information on many of the resources mentioned in this article, and many that are not.]

Preparation

New Librarian: I don't know much about religion. What is the best way to start?

Answer: *First, be not afraid.* Religion and theology can be as complex and convoluted as any other academic field, but a librarian possesses research skills that makes learning about any new subject achievable. Gaining subject knowledge takes time, of course, but a librarian knows how to find the needed information to succeed.

Once assigned an unfamiliar subject area, interviewing someone who does the work is a great help. Before beginning my position, I only had a couple of hours with an expert, and it helped quite a bit. Connecting with a willing mentor, especially if a continuing relationship can be established, can be a key to success.

Familiarization

How can I get to know what the Library offers regarding religion?

Learn what subject resources are available and where things are. This includes print reference tools and e-reference clusters to which the library subscribes (Credo, Oxford, and Gale packages, for example), including the individual reference works they contain. The new librarian should look at other libraries' collections, in person or via online catalogs, and compare, learning what is not held locally, and finding out why. Browsing the stacks and e-books is also helpful, as well as continual reading in the subject area.

What is the best way to learn about library and departmental needs?

Learning about the theology/religion program, how it is taught, and who teaches what, is a helpful way to start. A look at core curriculum requirements, class schedules, and current or recent syllabi—often available online—will provide an idea of where to focus reading and energy.

**By Tony Amodeo, Associate Librarian
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Preparation Experience:

More than twenty-five years ago, I was hired as a reference librarian at Loyola Marymount University (LMU), a Catholic university on the west coast. I had a pre-Vatican II Catholic education, but I felt insecure about helping people who might know far more than I about theology. So, before leaving Illinois, I consulted the theology librarian at Loyola University in Chicago. Sister Rita Stalzer had rich experience in theology reference and collection development. She kindly sat me down, calmed my insecurities, gave me some good advice, a couple of sample pathfinders, and sent me over to the pastoral institute elsewhere in the university, to get hold of some information on pastoral rather than academic materials. In that one day, a lot of good seeds were planted, including the most important one: giving me a little confidence.

The questions that get asked at the reference desk by students, both the type of question and the subject areas, can help identify focus areas and reference tools that will help answer student requests. A librarian can also get a photocopy of common assignments if possible, and diplomatically query teachers if assignments are not clear or if supportive information is not readily available.

Getting to know some of the most requested or most pertinent tools intimately, whether print reference sets or online databases, is an important way to become familiar with the job. For example, for interreligious studies with an anthropological approach, there's the second edition of the Eliade *Encyclopedia of Religion.* The second edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* is an excellent help for both religious and cultural topics, including New Testament background questions. And the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* covers more than just Catholicism. Some reference tools have hidden features to exploit. For example, Aland's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* has an appendix that lists the pericopes or episodes in Jesus's life, showing what verses in which Gospel refer to respective stories; so if a student wants to write about the Sermon on the Mount or a particular parable, it is helpful for finding which verses to look up in the New Testament, and in Biblical commentaries. Conducting a variety of searches in the religion databases to which the library subscribes, for example, the Scripture search tutorial ATLA provides for its indexing database, and working through the help pages and tutorials in each database is an excellent way to become prepared.

Some people are highly sensitive about their religious beliefs. Reference librarians generally pay attention to subtle clues about their clients, and with religion, there is a special need to be very present and aware of people's reactions to what is said and found. A librarian is a guide, not a doctrine-enforcer.

I don't feel like I know enough about religion to even ask intelligent questions, much less answer them.

With supervisor and faculty permission, librarians can often take a religion or theology class where they work. If possible, serve as a resource in the class as well; in other words, become an *embedded librarian.* For unfamiliar territory, introductory level could be useful, especially if one keeps up with the readings and assignments. By participating in this way, at least one area—Biblical studies, church history, ethics, dogmatics, world religions—will become familiar enough for an understanding of the context of reference and research questions, meaning a better capacity to help clients from that point on. *So learn at least one area in some depth.*

How else can one become familiar with a subject area, when taking a class is not an option?

Looking at the class texts or some survey-level textbooks and reading the tables of contents for the main topics to cover in readings is helpful. Browsing Oxford's new Very Short Introductions series or the equivalent, on individual religions and topic areas; perusing databases for interesting articles, and checking out the most interesting citations; systematically reading books in a number of areas and/or religions; and discovering useful blogs, are additional ways to learn about a subject. The American Theological Library Association's (ATLA) *Theological Librarianship* is a substantive, peer-reviewed journal covering a range of scholarly and practical topics, and includes trends and book reviews. ATLA has made the journal open-access on the Web, so it's free. Reading it regularly opens a much fuller view of the content and horizons of librarianship in religion and theology, including contributions to scholarship.

Embedment Experience

New to the library, busy but not overwhelmed, I obtained the permission of my supervisor, and embedded myself in an introductory undergraduate Old Testament class during the slower summer season. I audited that class, but eventually took some courses in my areas (I had many) for credit (winding up with another MA—but in English, not theology). Whether auditing or going for credit, I completed the readings. I gingerly took part in class discussions, trying not to dominate or intimidate fellow students.

When there was a research paper assigned, I sometimes obtained the professor's permission to take class time to review basic sources and strategies for my fellow students. I tried to become the students' go-to person for term paper research. I made myself available to them, even if it meant tweaking my schedule, or staying a little late. When the Internet became mainstream, I began answering e-mails from home. By doing the assigned readings, I learned where topics lay and how they related to the teachers' schemata, and I was more prepared to be of help.

Instruction

How can one with little or no teaching experience become more comfortable providing instruction?

Unlike when I started out, today there are many great books and articles, the Information Literacy Instruction Discussion List (ILI-L) listserv, and many other tools to help prepare a librarian to teach. With a computer and projector handy in the classroom, LibGuides or other Web-based helps can be demonstrated in the class, without the need of extensive notes. If the library doesn't provide such resources, use PowerPoint presentations, which if worded sparingly, with color images and pictures, and even sound files, can be equally effective.

So it's easier now than when you started? I thought things were more complex today.

A: More complex, yes; technology does that. But today we have moved beyond just showing images of pages; live demonstrations of databases are the norm. We have computer classrooms and labs where students can conduct hands-on tasks and put what they learn to immediate use, dramatically increasing their retention. While not all things are easier, the learning is definitely better, and it does not necessarily stop—or start—in the classroom. Creating tutorials using Jing or other authoring programs opens up other possibilities, including inserting them in a Web subject guide. Some faculty put library-authored tutorials and LibGuides on the class Blackboard page a different way to embed the librarian. It takes thought, preparation and some hard work to get these things done, of course. However, given enough preparation time, doing some homework, and using some creativity, even the newest librarians will do fine in the classroom.

How can one deal with anxiety about teaching and public speaking?

Many of us have had at least one student fall asleep in an 8 a.m. class. I move closer and speak a little more loudly, and they usually pop back up. However, finding that students fall asleep during most of one's presentations is disturbing…and was for me, too. I made up my mind to get better. I started off by taking a speech class so I could learn to project better to the back of a large classroom. Later, I took a couple of acting classes, to give me confidence, and a little more presence. It all helps! Additionally, taking a class provides an opportunity to promote library services or instruction to the teacher. Ask to sit in on classes taught by other librarians and faculty known to be great at teaching. This is also a definite learning opportunity. Finally, many institutions offer various kinds of faculty teaching support programs that provide resources beyond the library.

Professional Groups and Mentors

I'm from a pretty small institution without a lot of resources. How else can I learn more about doing my job?

We're all standing on the shoulders of giants, and of a lot of others, too, and there are many opportunities to get the benefits of communicating regularly with those in the profession. Local groups, regional groups and national groups not only put on workshops and sponsor programs; they usually offer regular meetings, which are chances to learn by listening, by asking questions, and by making friends with those who can be turned to should a crisis—or just an impossibly hard reference question—arise.

Instruction Experience

While I was still a new librarian, a theology professor walked up to me one day and asked me to come into his class and help students understand how to use the collections for their work, including finding appropriate reference tools, books and articles. I took a deep breath and thought, "Now's my chance!"

It was more than twenty-five years ago, and I had never heard the two words "library instruction" next to each other, even in Library School. So I read my first lecture to the class; it was a very quick learning experience to never do that again! No one had to tell me; I knew. The second class went a little better, done off 3x5 cards, but still pretty darn awful. Then, thanks to a local instruction-focused librarians' group, I discovered transparencies and slides. We didn't even have a photocopier that enlarged, so I had to send off for photostats to cut and tape down so I could blow things up large enough to see on the screen. Lots of cutting and taping and creativity, as I even snipped and taped individual words off of photocopies, hand-drew magnifying glasses around enlarged text, superimposed over the full page of a subject index, so students could see how indexes were arranged and what a citation looked like. When computers came along, it made things a whole lot easier.

What are some examples of this?

Some international or national groups of librarians dealing with religion, like the American Theological Library Association, the Catholic Library Association, the Association of Christian Librarians, and others, cover a multitude of skills and professional activities. Other, less subject-tied groups may be focused just on collection development, preservation, reference, or instruction—like Library Orientation Exchange (LOEX), Workshop for Instruction in Library Use (WILU), and subdivisions of the American Library Association. Their conventions give multiple opportunities to learn from experts, both presenters and attendees, to consult with book publishers and database vendors, and their customers. If getting to conventions and annual meetings is impossible or impractical, online Webinars and other training may be available, whether offered by a product company or library group, or even a commercial service like Lynda.com. Participating in local or regional groups covering needed skills and knowledge also offers opportunities; they welcome new members, and after some time, potential officers!

Collection Development

Part of my liaison duty is building the collections in religion. What is a good way to start?

Every library is a little different in scope, the curriculum supported, budget, and culture. So to build the collections, a librarian needs to know them. We tend to be expansive about information, extending the collections a little beyond the expected, to be sure there are no significant gaps that might discourage intellectual curiosity. But librarians in a very sectarian place, or with a very limited budget, might need to figure out which parameters can stretch, and where to hold the line. If the library has one, it would be very useful indeed to consult with the collection development officer to find out this kind of information.

A record of books and reference tools for which students are constantly searching, especially if for a specific, regularly offered class, is one way to identify needed material. Additionally, every library should have a strong reference core for required classes. For example, for Biblical studies in any library, at minimum there should be a variety of worthy Bible translations, including 'study bible' editions, and both Testaments in the original languages; concordances for the main translations; word study tools, like the *Anchor Bible Dictionary;* some good one-volume commentaries, like the *New Jerome* and *Harpers,* and perhaps a multi-volume commentary like the *New Interpreter's;* there should also be a good Bible atlas. Libraries with a complement of classes and majors in religion will go a lot further in each of these categories, with a mix of print and online sources, like the *Oxford Biblical Studies Online* database, to accommodate students both on and off campus.

Religion and theology books that often have to be replaced due to loss, theft, damage, or wear, are likely the most heavily used. Strange, but true, as my former boss, noted library educator and author Ed Evans used to say, "That is your core collection."

Of course, a new librarian should find out whether there is a collection development policy for theology/religion on file, or if a more general one exists for the library, which may help determine scope and limitations. If there is no policy for religion/theology collections, this can be something to formulate later on, when, between practice and departmental and accreditation needs, there is a clearer picture.

Collections Experience

I spoke with the acquisitions librarian often (and, in those tight budget days, especially when she blocked one of my orders). When I could, I spent some time at the catalog (then a card catalog), and some time walking around the stacks, to get a feel for the strengths and weaknesses of the collection. Even just roughly comparing how many books are on X vs. Y, and comparing the number of courses offered on X vs. Y, was a help to see what might need building up. It is easier today to get statistics about what gets checked out, what is used in-house, and the kinds of religion/theology books requested through InterLibrary Loan from elsewhere. I was somewhat lucky that the theology faculty had recently weeded the collection before my arrival; in other ways, I would have learned far more if I had gotten to work with them on the project.

At one point, I was asked to help determine the cost of upgrading the collections sufficiently to support a Theology master's program. The price proved too steep for the times, and the new program was put on ice. I knew in my heart the day would come, so I slowly began buying more advanced monographs for select topic areas, and identified some standing orders for the future. A few years later, the Master's program was initiated, and we were not as unprepared as we might have been (note: sometimes new programs pop up without giving the library a clue beforehand; a bad situation). I did not know that, one day, the program would be my major liaison area; a happy assignment for me, indeed.

Religion librarians elsewhere are going to have different standards and focuses and possibilities. What can I do locally?

Talking to the acquisitions staff and/or collection development officer will provide information about what the budget allows, and whether the faculty participate in building the collections—and if they do so willingly. Find out which faculty do buy adequately, and in what areas. Spending time in the religion/theology department, finding out where the religion professors eat lunch, and spending lunch hours there with one or more of them when possible, can help one become familiar with the needs of the department.

If there is a particular faculty member who is the designated subject contact for the library, become acquainted; even take him or her out to lunch! Listen for comments about that new seminar being taught next term, that newly hired expert in a new area, that new program. Follow up with the individual professor, and with the department head. Let the collection development or acquisitions chief know what has been learned. Find out what can be spent to support what's coming down the pipe. And don't forget to suggest library instruction—and a subject guide—for that new course!

Are there specific tools to help build the collection?

For selection help, a variety of religion-related offerings are listed in *Books for College Libraries* and *Choice.* Approval plan order cards or online vendor software listings, like Baker & Taylor YBP's Global Online Bibliographic Information (GOBI) titles, provide additional choices.

There are focused review journals like *Religious Studies Review* and the reviews in *Catholic Library World* (or a denominational variant). Important religion journals like *Theological Studies, Journal of the American Academy of Religion/JAAR,* and the duo of *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament,* and *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* should be consulted as well. All these have excellent book review sections or annual bibliographical supplements. If the religion program is expanding, check for bibliographies of retrospective titles that might be needed for specific subjects.

If there are one or two approval plans whose profiles have been updated recently and build the collections automatically, so much the better. If not, many individual titles will have to be identified for order. See Appendix II for a list.

Utilize available tools to know what should—or at least what can—be ordered.

Finally, if there are student workers with time to fill, train one to check the items selected from catalogs and journals against the library catalog to avoid duplicates; then to accurately fill out order cards or online order forms for what is not held. This makes more time available for selection and increases efficiency. Whenever possible, get help for the busywork.

Getting up close

Do you ever feel conflicted about spending time helping the faculty while working for the library?

Sometimes there are apparent conflicts of interest, of course, and time management is a necessity. The library is the employer, but liaison support of the teaching faculty is also critical to a librarian's and to a library's success, and to the institutional mission.

An effective liaison will become an advocate for the faculty, finding out what they need and making it known to library colleagues. If there is a proposal for a new library policy or procedure or service or other change, it should be looked at from the point of view of the faculty, to see what problems or negative emotions it might raise, and make colleagues aware of ways of mitigating any negative effects. That serves the library as well as the faculty.

Close Encounters Experience

In the last couple of years, I've done something new for me. I now keep some regular reference hours in the theology department, with a laptop computer available so that I can help students or faculty with their information questions or needs. This makes me both more visible and more available, and also gives me the opportunity to know what is going on in the department;who is publishing what, new faculty/subject positions, new courses, details about upcoming accreditation visits, and what problems their students are having with papers and assignments. It has enabled me to start work on a LibGuide for a new course early enough to do a good job, getting faculty input regarding the content or any special category of information needed for assignments. It has helped generate more instruction sessions—both one-on-one and class sessions—than in the past. Roving or off-site reference helps me contribute to needs I might not have discovered had I stayed in the library.

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Besides lunch and making appointments, how might I get close enough to the faculty to really make a difference?

If possible, a liaison should spend regular time in the department, in a place with good connectivity, a computer or tablet, business cards, style sheet handouts, goodies like free bookmarks or treats, and a sign. The schedule should be publicized to let faculty and students know their librarian is there—and that the librarian cares. There's nothing like a sincere personal effort to be present to their needs, to show them it is so.

A librarian should also try to attend departmental faculty presentations and student events, colloquia and special occasions, even if it means adjusting schedules. Besides the subject knowledge gained, the librarian's presence shows interest and identification with the program, interest in the faculty, and is perceived less like an interloper and more like someone who belongs; sincerity shows.

Finally

Feeling better about the liaison assignment?

I think I'm starting to get the picture. It actually is starting to sound a bit exciting! You seem to be enjoying it, at least.

To be perfectly honest, you start to *enjoy the learning and the people, and finding and using creativity to extend services and yourself in new ways.* It's called "job satisfaction" and, for me, it's the greatest of motivators.

A subject and liaison librarian is many things: *a scholar, a teacher, a collector, and an ambassador.* These multiple roles involve work, often a lot of work. But it's well worth the effort, and is ultimately rewarding. Enjoy the journey!

1 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2010: (NCES 2010-015), chapter 3. "Fast Facts." See links for Tables 282 and 283. http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=37. (accessed January 25, 2012).

2 Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, "U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey,." http://www.pewforum.org/U-S-Religious-Knowledge-Survey-Who-Knows-What-About-Religion.aspx. (accessed Jan. 21, 2012).

APPENDIX I: Some Useful Resources

Sample Organizations
American Theological Library Association (ATLA) • International non-profit association of theological librarians from academic institutions, seminaries and archives. Annual conference in June. Wide range of interest and denominational groups within the Association; many local chapters in the United States and Canada. Producer of the *ATLA Religion Database,* the newly digital *ATLA Historical Monographs,* and now, the *Catholic Periodical and Literature Index (CPLI).* Their website (http://www.atla.com) can help identify regional or local subgroups.

Note: The online course "Theological Librarianship" is offered by ATLA through the University of Illinois. ATLA members can register for an in-state tuition rate. This is a great course to take for those planning to dwell in theological librarianship as a career.

Catholic Library Association (CLA) • Smaller international non-profit association of both Catholic librarians and others working in Catholic institutions, including academic, archival, K-12 and parish librarians. The Association includes local chapters around the United States, and has an annual conference during Easter week at the National Catholic Education Association conference site. I need not describe what they publish, but one should be sure to read through the book review section—religiously! The website is available at http://www.cathla.org.

Association of Christian Librarians (ACL) is an evangelical Protestant association, supporting Christian seminaries and libraries. It has consortial borrowing, consortial OCLC and EBSCO purchasing, and the TREN archive of digitized theses/dissertations. Web site at http://www.acl.org/.

Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) is an international non-profit association combining the prior Jewish Librarians Association of academic librarians with the Jewish Library Association's synagogue, school and community libraries. It offers a number of educational resources, including one for identifying worthy children's literature. Local chapters in the United States, Canada, and Mexico City. The website is available at http://www.jewishlibraries.org.

Association of Theological Schools (ATS) covers the United States and Canada, and is "a membership organization of… graduate schools that conduct post-baccalaureate professional and academic degree programs to educate persons for the practice of ministry and for teaching and research in the theological disciplines" (http://www.ats.edu). ATS accredits member schools and their graduate theological degree programs.

LOEX, LOEX of the West, and WILU are national librarian organizations that deal with and have annual conferences on library instruction. LOEX and LOEX of the West hold their meetings in the United States, whereas WILU holds its meetings in Canada. LOEX of the West and WILU websites are for the current year and conference, and change annually.

LOEX: http://www.emich.edu/public/loex/loex.html

LOEX of the West conference: http://woodbury.libguides.com/lotw2012

WILU conference: http://sites.macewan.ca/wilu2012/

Pertinent Listservs
ATLANTIS • ATLA's main listserv for members is a great place to see the wider world of theological information, and watch experts in action answering questions and supplying information for the rest of us. Scholarly queries and practical advice are both abundant. Some denominational or interest subgroups have an additional listserv, e.g., ATLARC for the Catholic-affiliated.

ILI-L • Listserv for library instruction (succeeding Martin Raish's BI-L), hosted by the American Library Association. Very active list with a large archive, dealing with all aspects of instruction, from technology to pedagogy, with members

from a wide range of institutions. A good way to keep current and get advice for your instruction planning and activities.

PRTdig • Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Philosophical, Religious, and Theological Discussion Group of the American Library Association. The group meets at the annual ALA and biennial ACRL conference. It has a listserv, though not a very active one now, as a lot of organizational energy has migrated to their blog, whose homepage is http://prtdiscussiongroup.blogspot.com/

Helpful Publications

Theological Librarianship • ATLA's open access online journal, with peer-reviewed articles and new book and database reviews. http://www.theolib.org/

Catholic Library World (CLW) • Articles for all types of libraries, including academic, can be found in this quarterly international journal. It is a great resource for book reviews on theological and religious topics, as well as professional library literature.

RSR: Religious Studies Review • A combination of long literature review essays updating specific topics, and nicely organized reviews of new monographs, including some reference titles and some that bridge the religion/classics, religion/history and religion/sociology divides. Those with graduate programs will find RSR indispensable.

Journal of the American Academy of Religion (JAAR) • A quarterly international journal of religious studies, covering all traditions. An important book review section.

The Oxford University Press series, "Very Short Introductions" • Available both in print and online, this series addresses individual topics of interest in a small format in under two hundred pages. Topics can be general (e.g. Theology) or specific (e.g., Dead Sea Scrolls), and many are about individual religions and denominations (e.g. Anglicanism, Islam, Buddhism). An alternative would be something like Gordon Melton's *Encyclopedia of American Religions,* the 8th edition of which (retitled as Melton's *Encyclopedia…*) is available online through Gale. Melton clusters religions into their historic families, which is helpful in knowing clusters of related belief.

Research Strategies: Finding Your Way Through the Information Fog • 4th ed. (iUniverse, 2011). William Badke's widely used and engaging guide to doing research for students, and a classic help to librarians for finding ways to help students become information literate.

Teaching Theology & Religion • A quarterly journal aimed at better teaching, supported by several religion centers and academic associations. It is useful for understanding the techniques that theology and religion professors use and, even more importantly, understanding what they are trying to achieve with their classes. The journal also includes reviews of textbooks for theology & religion classes, both undergraduate and advanced.

Suggested Websites

Internet Guide to Religion (Wabash Center) • Expert list of links on a wide variety of religion and religion-related topics; includes denominational groupings. http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/guide_headings.aspx

Religious Studies Web Guide • Well-organized list of links (by format, and by religious group/denomination) for academic use. Saundra Lipton (Univ. of Calgary) and Cheryl Adams (Library of Congress) maintain this excellent resource. http://people.ucalgary.ca/~lipton/

Virtual Religion Index • Mahlon H. Smith's organized list of links for many aspects of religion and a very wide range of religious groups worldwide. Not revised for a while, but still useful. http://virtualreligion.net/vri/

K. C. Hanson's Home Page • A very engaging website developed over the years by Dr. Hanson, an expert on the ancient Middle East. Contains linked lists of associations and journals, and of websites on the ancient world, and of a number of important library catalogs and publishers, full-text articles and chronologies, photo galleries, and more. http://www.kchanson.com/

Catholic Resources for Bible, Liturgy, Art, and Theology • Site created by Felix Just, SJ. Another example of an erudite scholar's Web-based contribution to religious education for the benefit of all interested persons. Useful for students, but also for pastoral ministry support. http://catholic-resources.org/

Holy See: The Vatican Web Site • A multilingual documentation of the history and current events of the Vatican and the Catholic Church, its papal and ecclesiastical leaders and its archives. Full text abounds, including the *Catechism* and the documents of Vatican II. Numerous subdivisions, from the Vatican Library to papal addresses, and from the Curia to new saints. It even has a virtual tour of the Sistine Chapel. http://www.vatican.va

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops • site of this organization, including the texts of pastoral letters (sent out to all dioceses), and of the various departments and interest groups that make up the structure of the organization, including groups in dialogue with other faiths. http://usccb.org/

Catholic Reference Resources: McCabe Updated • The last edition of James McCabe's *A Critical Guide to Catholic Reference Books* (1989) has been digitized into a freely available wiki by volunteers from both the Roman Catholic denominational group within ATLA (ATLARC) and the Academic Section of the Catholic Library Association. Melody Layton McMahon, the founder and guiding light of the project, has put out a call for volunteers to update the resulting project with newer books and descriptions, and the process is in the beginning stages at this writing. http://cathrefbooks.wikidot.com

Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA) • An association of Catholic libraries and archives supporting open digital access to metadata and some full text research materials at their, and eventually other, Catholic institutions. Their Internet portal "provides access to rare, unique and/or uncommon materials in libraries, seminaries, special collections and archives. By electronically bringing together resources in many formats from many collections, the portal enables easy, effective and global discovery of Catholic research resources." Web site: http://www.catholicresearch.net/

Other Sites • Besides official denominational church sites, there are commercial or member websites aimed at those of a particular faith, or particular approach to that faith. Many of these include links to valuable foundational documents, including sacred text translations (Bible, Qu'ran, Bhagavad-Gita), commentaries, texts of important theologians, etc.

For example, Catholic News (http://catholicnews.com) is part of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, with news and blogs and is a source of information for many Catholic publications around the world; whereas New Advent (http://www.newadvent.org) is a private site aimed at traditional Roman Catholics, containing or linking to many important texts, including a searchable Bible, writings of Church Fathers, Aquinas's *Summa Theologica,* the 1907-1912 *Catholic Encyclopedia,* and a library of other important texts and hagiographies.

Guidelines & Competencies checklist

• RUSA RSS Competencies for Reference and User Services Librarians—The Reference and User Services division of ALA provided these guidelines in 2003 (soon to be updated). Web site at http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/resources/guidelines/professional.cfm

• Note that interested committees of ALA's divisions (ACRL, RUSA, RBMS, etc.) and their subdivisions are almost always revising guidelines and competencies checklists for topics ranging from library literacy competencies to safe handling of rare books in transit to and from exhibits. Some of these statements are exhaustive and all-encompassing, but there is something useful to be learned even by just skimming them. The ALA Web site provides particular sets of guidelines to examine. http://www.ala.org/index.cfm

Further Reading

For more information on being a subject librarian and liaison, see articles like the following (which—perhaps unfortunately—I did not consult, having pledged to myself not to write an 'academic' article, but just an informative one):

Gibson, Craig, and Jamie Wright Coniglio. "The New Liaison Librarian: Competencies for the 21st Century Academic Library." In *The Expert Library: Staffing, Sustaining, and Advancing the Academic Library in the 21st Century,* ed. by Scott Walker and Karen Williams, Chapter 5, pp. 93-126. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010.

Cipkin, Christopher, and David Stacey. "Reflecting Roles: Being a Successful Subject Liaison Librarian in a Changing Environment." *SCONUL Focus* 45, (2009): 27-31.

Stoddart. Richard A., and others. "Going Boldly Beyond the Reference Desk: Practical Advice and Learning Plans for New Reference Librarians Performing Liaison Work." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 12.4 (July 2006): 419-427.

Tucker, James Tory ,and Matt Torrence. "Collection Development for New Librarians: Advice from the Trenches." *Library Collections, Acquisitions & Technical Services* 28 (2004): 397-409.

For additional recommended articles on Collection Development, see the following bibliography provided by the ALA's technical services and collections division, ALCTS: http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alcts/resources/collect/collmgt/collasmt.cfm

APPENDIX 2: Tips for Collection Development

The tighter the budget, the more book reviews can assist in choosing appropriate titles. Still, publishers' catalogs can be very helpful in building a collection. A librarian should determine what paper or online catalogs would be pertinent for particular clientele.

• Libraries that provide for **graduate and faculty research** will probably order many titles from the excellent but very scholarly and somewhat expensive publishers like Brill, Continuum, T&T Clark, and Peeters, as well as foreign language publishers like Les Éditions du Cerf, Brepols, Herder, and the Vatican's non-English titles. If a library supports, or can only afford to buy for, undergraduate level students, these may be less useful for ordering, though reading their catalogs can help one learn about what is going on in different areas of theology.

• Libraries with a broader **undergraduate** audience will buy a mix of scholarly and more popular works, covering both the theology major and beginning undergraduate taking a core requirement. The strictures of an institution—which can be very curriculum-tied, or denominationally or doctrinally determined—may set the limits of ordering. But for most theology programs, one can go to the more broadly aimed religious publishers like Orbis, Fortress, Paulist, Westminster, Liturgical Press, Jewish Publication Society, InterVarsity, Zondervan, Eerdmans, etc. For those with theology/religion majors, religious publications of reliable academic publishers like Oxford, Georgetown, Cambridge, Princeton, Notre Dame, Duke, Fordham, and other university presses should be consulted. More specifically subject-focused publishers like Gorgias and the Society for Biblical Literature should also be used.

• Of course, see catalogs for any specific **denominational publishers** of the institution's affiliation, like Holy Cross Orthodox Press, St. Mary's Press, or Union for Reformed Judaism (URJ). See reprint houses for old classics that need replacing; for example, Wipf & Stock and TAN Books both do religion reprints.

• Depending on budget and audience, one can look at a mix of some scholarly but mostly more popular titles reviewed in *Booklist, Library Journal* or *Publisher's Weekly* for **supplementary titles** to reach the less specialized needs of lower division courses and for general religious interest and personal seeking.

• If the **approval plan** seems to miss a lot of good titles, work with the acquisitions librarian on reviewing the theology/religion profiles, with the aid of faculty input. Catalog searching can be times to confirm approval plan selections, and to avoid duplicate orders and not waste time.

• Finally, on a small budget, a **'wish list'** of titles/series that are cost prohibitive can be prepared, should some generous alum or library friends group or other benefactor offer the library a small or large purse to help build the collection.