From the Archives: The Library at Asbury Theological Seminary: The Center of Academic Learning

While many people think about the history of their institutions, and indeed often depend on the library and its archives for preserving that history, they seldom think about the history of the library itself. As we are in our 100th year celebration at Asbury Theological Seminary, it becomes important to note the significance of the library as the heartbeat of the community. This did not happen overnight or by coincidence, but through the hard work and effort of generations of people who desired to help Asbury’s students develop the research skills and abilities to become world class scholars, academics, and pastors. Dr. R. David Lankes (director of the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina) has put it, “Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities.” While the library at Asbury Theological Seminary has developed a world class collection, especially in terms of the Holiness Movement, it has also helped shape and form the larger community in the process, especially through its services and the use of the collection by the community. The library of Asbury Theological Seminary owes its very existence and growth during hard times to the very community it serves; its history shows this well, and as such the collection is a very real reflection of the community itself.

1923-1933

During its first decade, Asbury Theological Seminary was a part of Asbury College (now Asbury University), operating out of the Morrison Building on the College campus. It did not have a separate library, but students and faculty used the Asbury College library. However, during this time, President H.C. Morrison did begin the work of building the theological collection of the College for the use of the new Seminary. In February of 1924, in writing about the Seminary in The Pentecostal Herald, Morrison noted:
We have at Asbury College a library of something over ten thousand volumes, but we desire very much to make a large improvement in our Theological Department and we would be profoundly grateful to anyone who may feel led to contribute to this department. We would be so thankful if old Methodist ministers, or their widows would give us books for this department. If there are aged ministers or their widows who have old Methodist books that they are not able to donate, we would be glad to get in correspondence with them. We might be able to make a trade that would be helpful to them and us. We want all the sound books we can get hold of in the realm of Theology and Philosophy. We are eager to get hold of the very oldest and the very latest books on all phases of biblical subjects that have been written by men who are true to the Bible and the Christ of the Bible.³

Kinghorn notes that one of the largest donations to come from this appeal for the Asbury College theological library was from W.W. Cary who gave over 3,000 books to the library.⁴ But for the most part, it was small donations from readers of The Pentecostal Herald that provided theological books to Asbury College on behalf of the new Seminary.

1933-1943

In 1939, it became important for Asbury Theological Seminary to be recognized as a separate entity. First, there was a need for a larger campus as the Seminary continued to grow. Second, Morrison wanted to develop a fully accredited theological seminary with a three-year program, but he had limited funding or endowments to accomplish this goal while connected to the College. Third, the accreditors wanted to see the Seminary as a separate institution apart from Asbury College, before it could be accredited.

It was decided to rent the Asbury-Talbott Inn, a hotel and restaurant owned by the College, across the street from the campus of Asbury College. While the building was rented for two years, accreditation of the Seminary required that it be a completely separate entity from the College, and so the Asbury-Talbott Inn was traded for the Morrison building, giving Asbury Theological Seminary its first independently owned building in 1941.

In the following division of resources, Asbury College provided 650 books from its collection as the core of the Seminary’s library, keeping other volumes donated for their own accreditation needs. In addition, Seminary professors freely offered the use of their personal books to students when needed. With limited financial resources, the Seminary relied once
again on President H.C. Morrison’s connections through his publication of *The Pentecostal Herald* to try and increase the library holdings instead of relying on the generous nature of the Seminary professors. Dean F.H. Larabee issued the call for book donations in January of 1941. Larabee wrote:

> We believe that there is a large reading clientele of *The Pentecostal Herald*, who would become interested in such a worthy object as the building up of a fine Theological Library, which will become available for the use of young men in their training to become preachers of the gospel. It would, indeed, be an exceedingly worthy enterprise and should become the inspiration of hundreds and even thousands of men and women scattered over the entire area of the Holiness Movement.

> We come to you, then, to ask that you allow yourself to become interested in this undertaking. The collection of such a library easily takes form that lends itself to the possible aid of nearly every man, woman and child in Christendom. There is scarcely a single person, who does not have control of at least one book, in which you have had an absorbing interest, and have perused its contents and made its material yours, and now can pass it on to others, who may also enjoy its inspiration and thus be able to make their lives richer by reading its pages. Just a few copper cents will pay the transportation of such a book to the doors of Asbury Theological Library and many young men in the course of years will be preaching a richer and more productive gospel, because they have read that book. 

This appeal worked and material began to arrive, making it important to develop the library staff. The first library worker, who started organizing the books, was a student named Harold Shingledecker who had some training in library science. He seems to have organized about 2,000 items as a volunteer in 1941, and the material was kept in a room in the basement of the Asbury-Talbott Inn (later renamed the Larabee-Morris Building).

1943-1953

Asbury Seminary during the period of 1943-1953 continued to grow while actively seeking accreditation from the American Association of Theological Schools. A library report from October and November of 1943 exists in which the library spent $7.92 on a subscription to the *Courier Journal*, bought one book, and the rest went for library and office supplies.
This report is signed by E. Edwin LeMaster, who is listed as the librarian, but his role is unclear. According to Shipps:

In order to comply with its quest for accreditation the Board of Trustees through its Executive Committee designated a minimum of five hundred dollars per year for new books. This annual influx of a thousand volumes soon over-taxed the housing space, and early in 1944 the library was moved to the alumni hall, an old store building rented from Asbury College at the corner of Lexington Avenue and College Street, just North of the Seminary building. As the collection grew, the funds were still not at a level deemed appropriate to achieve the goals of the administration for 15,000 volumes, so an appeal was made to the alumni for a gift of $40 each. An account of a 1945 Executive Committee meeting, notes that following the death of H.C. Morrison, the Seminary was committed to constructing three buildings: a library, an administration building, and a chapel. Library material was part of the concern of the American Association of Theological Schools and so the Executive Committee approved a plan to raise $10,000 for the purchase of books ($2,500 from the Pentecostal Publishing Company, $5,000 from the Glide Foundation, and $2,500 to be raised by the Board of Trustees with each member asked to personally raise $200). As Shipps notes, “The success of this movement to establish an adequate theological library may be seen as an important turning point in the general academic success of the Seminary.” Also in 1944 or 1945, Dr. Harold Kuhn was designated as Director of Library Affairs by the Executive Committee.
Lena Barbara Nofcier, the first Professional Library Director at Asbury Theological Seminary from 1945-1949. She was both a Librarian and Student at Asbury College from 1925-1930 (on the left) and the Director at Asbury Theological Seminary (on the right)

(Images Courtesy of Asbury University and the B.L. Fisher Archives and Special Collections)

In 1945-1946, Asbury hired its first professional librarian, Lena Barbara Nofcier (1945-1949) who reclassified the library's holdings following the Union Catalog. She came to Asbury College in 1925 as a student and a librarian, and in this role, she was active in planning the Morrison Memorial Library Building and reorganizing the College library. Due to her work, she tripled circulation of materials and doubled the size of the staff. Nofcier graduated from Asbury College in 1927, had a Library Certificate from the University of Iowa in 1926, and received a B.S. in Library Science from the University of Illinois in 1928. She continued to work at the Asbury College Library until 1930, when she followed Fannie C. Rawson as the Secretary of the Kentucky Library Commission. For fifteen years she was also the Director of the Library Extension Division of the Kentucky Library Association. Working with the Kentucky Parent Teacher Association and Elizabeth Fullerton, the state director of women's and professions projects for the Federal Works Project Administration, Nofcier
was a key part in developing the Pack Horse Library Project and raising funds for it.

As director of the Kentucky Library Commission, Noćcier’s staff compiled statistics and information on libraries in Kentucky compared with national standards. Her official correspondence reflects a determined woman who doggedly encouraged KCPT (Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers) members to voice library issues to their state legislatures. In 1934 she argued to the KCPT the need for the state to provide printed materials to schools. “It is impossible for a teacher to conduct classes without books and other printed aids,” she reasoned. “After a child learns to read, he must have access to books.” The next year she argued to the KCPT that “adequate library service should be provided to all people, rural as well as urban, colored as well as white.” But to do this more funds had to be available, “a more adequate state appropriation is necessary to meet the present demands for service,” she flatly stated. “With such a distressing picture of library conditions and needs in Kentucky should we not bestir ourselves to provide not only adequate library facilities, but also equal library privileges for every citizen?”

With her support, the packhorse library project was approved by the KCPT Board of Managers in 1936. She encouraged PTA involvement and asked every PTA member to give at least one penny to buy new books for the project. Raising money and promoting the work, Noćcier helped encourage and develop the project. She also emphasized carefully selecting materials to avoid those, “that might offend the mountain sentiments and destroy trust in the service. If local trust were destroyed then the entire service would be rendered useless.”
Packhorse Library Carriers Outside a Packhorse Library in Hindman, Kentucky (nd).

(In the Public Domain. Goodman-Paxton Photographic Collection, Kentucky Digital Library)

This unique project sought to encourage literacy in rural Appalachia by sending out librarians on horseback taking reading material to the people of the region. Reports indicate that one of the most requested books was the Bible, and librarians would often take the time to read books including portions of scripture at people’s request. Schmitzer writes that travelling libraries were a key part of library service in Kentucky, “Mounted carriers averaged over 5,000 miles per month visiting over 4,000 families and 55,000 individuals... Four pack horse carriers in Leslie County covered an area greater than the state of Delaware to serve 8,000 people in fifty-seven mountain communities.”

Nofcier’s work during the Depression and the years of World War II are credited as important periods of leadership in the history of the Kentucky Library Association. Nofcier would go on to run the public library in Lima, Ohio for fifteen years (1950-1965) before she retired. She would be known for her work in Lima by introducing the first radio paging system in U.S. libraries to increase efficiency.
While at Asbury Seminary, Nofcier also served as an associate editor on the first two issues of *The Asbury Seminarian* (now *The Asbury Journal*), and published one of the articles in the first issue in 1946 entitled, “The Library in a Growing Theological Seminary.” The next year, a cataloguer and an assistant librarian were added, all holding faculty level status, so by 1947 there were three full-time professional librarians at faculty status and ten part-time workers on staff. Both Fraley and Shipps agree that the development of the library and its staff were essential factors in making accreditation of the Seminary possible (Asbury was officially accredited by the American Association of Theological Schools in 1946). In 1947, the library moved into the basement of the Henry Clay Morrison Administration Building, which had just been completed, and in 1949, Susan A. Schultz became the second Library Director (1949-1966 and 1970-1978).15

From 1947-1954, the Library was on the Bottom Floor of the H.C. Morrison Administration Building.
Here are Several Early Library Workers: Ruth Warnock, Jane Lowell, Frieda (?), Myrtle Lamb

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By 1954, still running out of room, the library was moved into the ground floor of Estes Chapel. In the 1954-1955 report to the Board of Trustees, Shultz wrote, “On August 6, 1954, after the new book stacks had been assembled and arranged in the new library room, the moving of the book collection was begun. Two men, using book trucks, moved the collection in about 125 hours. When the Fall quarter opened everything was in place except 90 new chairs on which shipment was delayed until late September.” She noted later in that same report:

It is now ten years since the first professionally trained librarian was employed by the Seminary. Since that time the book collection has increased from about 5,000 poorly selected books classified by the Dewey Decimal System to over 34,000 all classified according to the Union Seminary classification system and fully cataloged. Then the library occupied one small room poorly equipped. Today it is located in a large room 117 ft x 50 ft equipped with modern steel book stacks and attractive furniture to fulfill the functions of an active library.

Shultz also wrote later that in most of the time before the move, the “furnishings consisted of a motley variety of army surplus tables and chairs,” and “shelves warped so badly, frequently requiring a kind of carpenter’s surgery so that the books could stand upright. Strips of linoleum lined the shelves to protect the books from the rough surfaces of the unfinished wood.” Shultz also noted that the move to Estes was delayed due to a lack of funds for furnishings. This was solved by a firm closing out a line of library furniture, so that the furnishing of the Estes library only cost $9,603.43 which included shipping! Susan Schultz’s primary work during this period was passionately advocating for a new building. In 1955, B.L. Fisher, an ardent supporter and board member of the Seminary, died and left an estate worth close to nine million dollars to the Seminary, a portion of which was set aside to construct the new library. Schultz was actively involved in all aspects of planning and designing the new facility, and it became her most enduring legacy.
From 1954-1967, the Library was on the Bottom Floor of Estes Chapel, Here Full of Students

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For the most part, the library collection continued to grow through small individual donations and a limited budget. But this situation was to change quite rapidly. In 1961, a matching grant from the Sealantic Fund was made to accredited seminaries, which the Seminary administration decided to accept. This meant an additional $6,000 for the purchase of books annually for three years above the usual book budget. This grant was designed to strengthen the library’s holdings in standard theological works. Susan Schultz wrote of this in her 1977-1978 report as an important step for the library:

A significant event which greatly stimulated the development of this library was the announcement at the ATLA conference at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. 1961 about the Library Development Program. This was made possible with a large grant from Sealantic of the Rockefeller Brother’s Fund. Accredited members of the then named American Association of Theological Schools were offered three annual grants of up to $3000 on a matching basis on condition that this would be added to the normal book budget. The “normal” figure was based on the book and periodical expenditures of the previous five years and Asbury’s was set at $5523! Overnight our book budget more than doubled and we were able to fill in many gaps in our
collection. After the first three years this program was extended with slight modifications for two more years. It is to the credit of the Seminary Administration that we were able to participate in this program receiving the maximum amount. Fortunately, the amount budgeted for library materials since then has been steady or increased regularly to meet the demands of a fast-growing institution, though not always keeping pace with inflation.\(^\text{18}\)

The Sealantic Grant would put the Asbury Theological Seminary Library on solid footing, with a sound core collection of theological material including a good run of historic periodicals, making it a true academic research library at the Masters level.

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\textbf{Before the B. L. Fisher Library Could be Constructed, the Seminary had to Purchase the Land where the Mt. Freedom Baptist Church sat.}

(Used with Permission of the B.L. Fisher Archives and Special Collections)
Mt. Freedom Baptist Church
was demolished to make way for the B.L. Fisher Library.

-(Used with Permission of the B.L. Fisher Archives and Special Collections)
In the Early 1960's Work was Underway to Design a New Library to be Named After Board Member B.L. Fisher. Here President Stanger and Susan Shultz Stand Beside a Drawing of the Newly Designed Face of Lexington Avenue in Wilmore.

(Used with Permission of the B.L. Fisher Archives and Special Collections)

1963-1973

The library at Asbury Theological Seminary continued in this period under the able leadership of Susan Shultz, except for a brief break from 1967-1969 when Onva K. Boshears, Jr. served as Director and Schultz as Associate Director. The work on the new library building continued, as well as the active shifting of material to keep pace with growth (even storing boxes of material in a hallway for a time). Finally, on October 10, 1967, the new B. L. Fisher Library building was dedicated. This move led to several important purchases and donations.

In 1969, the library purchased the official, numbered Faith and Order Documents gathered by A.T. DeGroot over 30 years, described as “the second-best set in the world, surpassed only by the file in Geneva.” This was also the year that the John Paul Papers were donated by his widow. As material like this was becoming available, and with the passing of many of the founders of the Seminary, the need for preserving Asbury’s heritage
became important. In 1970, a Heritage Room was established, and the Bulletin of Asbury Theological Seminary for 1971 notes:

The Heritage Room on the second floor was designed for the preservation of mementos related to the history of the Seminary and other old and historically significant materials. Dr. and Mrs. Lowell O. Ryan (Dr. Ryan serves as chairman of the Seminary’s Board of Trustees) donated the furnishings of this room in honor of Miss Susan A. Schultz, Director of Library Services, in recognition of her years of service and her part in planning the new library building. A dedication was held on January 28, 1970.20

This would provide the future foundation for the Archives and Special Collections of the B. L. Fisher Library, and would attract more donations and gifts of primary research material as it developed.

In 1970 Susan Shultz Set up a Heritage Room in the New B. L. Fisher Library, Which Would Become the Start of the Archives and Special Collections of Asbury Theological Seminary

(Used with Permission of the B.L. Fisher Archives and Special Collections)
Another major purchase made in 1972 was a collection of books from the Mercantile Library in New York City. In total, 8,275 volumes were purchased for the cost of $1.00 per item. A total of 4,499 were added to the collection and the remainder sold to students. A number of titles were extremely brittle, since the collection mostly dated to pre-1920, so these items were kept off of the main shelves for the future archives collection.

In a final note on this period, Schultz had a passion for really seeing the library become a center for academic research in the Holiness Movement, and her passion was contagious. In 1971, she set off on a project for the library to publish a series of Occasional Papers, which were academic bibliographies. These papers were written by young librarians who would go on to become major scholars in the field of the Pentecostal and Holiness Movements. They included Dr. Donald Dayton, Dr. William Faupel, and Dr. David Bundy. They proved that the library could do more than collect material; it could also produce world class scholars and publish material of value as well.

1973-1983

As Susan Schultz entered her third decade of leading the library, she initiated the establishment of the Archives and Special Collections in 1973. This period of time became strongly focused on collecting primary source material for the library, with the ongoing aim of creating a world class academic research library focused on the Holiness Movement. Most of the notable collections of this period are elements of this effort. One major donation to impact the book collection in this period was a $25,000 anonymous grant given in 1978 which was used to purchase the Assyriology Library of Dr. William Martin for $4,700, and the rest was used to supplement the regular collection development. Another possibly significant collection was a gift of over 1,000 books from Berea College made in 1975, but there is very little said about this collection, so it is hard to evaluate its significance. In addition, in 1982, a collection of early Wesley editions and 18th century Methodist material was also purchased. The library staff of the time was intensely busy with the decision in 1974 to move from the Union Catalog to the Library of Congress Classification System.

One of the earliest major collections for the growing Archives and Special Collections was the Christian Holiness Association Collection. Both Dr. Delbert Rose and Dr. Melvin Dieter were historians for this group.
and were instrumental in making it the backbone of Asbury’s Special Collections. This collection appears to have arrived in 1974, but was not completely processed until 1987. Additional collections of this time were mostly smaller, such as the Frank C. Laubach Library (1974), the Albert Day Papers (1975), the Harry C. Asbury Papers (1976), and material from Emily Morrison Chandler, the daughter of H.C. Morrison, including personal letters (1977). Of special note, a manuscript of E. Stanley Jones was given in 1977, which would pave the way for major future collections. In addition, the Order of St. Luke placed its collection on deposit of the Alfred W. Price Healing Collection of 530 books in 1975. Seminary organizations also began to see the value of the archives, and the Charles Killian Dramatic Ministries Collection was donated in 1980. With the growing archival collection, Michael Boddy was hired part-time as the Seminary Archivist and would serve until 1983.

With an archivist on staff, the collection became stronger. The Papers of Hannah Whitall Smith were purchased in 1982. This was the first collection to begin to put Asbury on the national map in terms of archival material. Dr. D. William Faupel, who had served as Public Services Librarian since 1970, replaced Susan Shultz as Library Director in 1978. Schultz left a much stronger library then she found in 1949, one with a new building, a strong foundational collection of over 112,000 volumes and 699 periodical titles (compared to 28,000 volumes and 266 periodical titles in 1949), and a growing Archives and Special Collections to establish a strong academic presence for Asbury Theological Seminary. Susan Schultz then launched into a new life, marrying Dr. Delbert Rose in 1986 and moving to Shell Point, Florida. They both became involved in mission work, Susan working with libraries while Delbert taught. Both Susan and Delbert would pass away just short of turning 100 years old (Susan in 2011 and Delbert in 2012).

1983-1993

In the following decade, the library entered well-equipped with a new Library Director (Dr. D. William Faupel) and a new full-time archivist (Sylvia Brown) who had been hired at part-time in 1983, but moved to a full-time position in 1984. In 1985, due to space considerations, the Archives moved down to the bottom floor of the library from the old heritage room on the second floor. In terms of collections, the archivist focused on material related to Asbury Theological Seminary with papers of faculty
like: Gilbert James, Ada B. Carroll, George Turner, Herbert Livingston, and Robert Coleman, as well as the papers for Presidents J.C. McPheeters and Frank Bateman Stanger taking precedence. The focus was on organization and processing these collections. By the end of this period the Papers of Paul Rees, the Papers of Delbert Rose, and the Papers of the Ed Robb Evangelistic Association would be added along with many similar collections.

The B. L. Fisher Library Leadership About 1982: (Left to Right) John Seery (Public Services Librarian), Michael Boddy (Seminary Archivist), D. William Faupel (Library Director), Kenneth A. Boyd (Director of Instructional Design and Media Services,) Donald Butterworth (Technical Services Librarian)

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There were, however, some very important archival collections to arrive outside of material tied to Asbury Theological Seminary. Material was added to the Hannah Whitall Smith material with the Papers of Robert Pearsall Smith (her husband) and the Papers of Ray Strachey (the Smiths’ daughter) in 1983. In the same year came the Records of Japan Mission, and this was followed in 1985 when the Seminary became the formal custodians of the Records of the United Methodist Church Kentucky Conference, which were placed on deposit. The Overseas Mission Society Collection
would follow about 1987, along with the Papers of Arthur Greene (which include a number of large paintings on canvas made for use in holiness camp meetings). These collections were followed by the Records of the Kentucky Mountain Holiness Association (1988), the Papers of E. F. Ward (1988), and the Records of the United Christian Ashrams (1991). These represent the major archival collections of the time, but there were many other smaller collections added or started during this period.

Donations grew in this period, and increasingly important collections of historical material were being purchased to add to the collection. But more often the library was being tasked with issues involving technology, and this period of time was heavily involved with cataloging issues, especially working on an electronic catalog to replace the outdated card catalog system. Electronic security and a growing computer lab also required technological investment and expertise.

In terms of purchasing book collections, some material, such as the collection of Dr. Frank Baker, was primarily older, hard-to-find material. The library purchased his 400-volume collection of early Methodist material for one-third of its appraised value. Over this period, the library worked out an arrangement with Dr. Melvin Dieter, one of the foremost scholars on the Holiness Movement, to purchase some of his library over a five-year period for a minimum of $2,500 and a maximum of $5,000, with any material over this amount being considered as gifts. Well over 2,000 books of significant historical value would enter the collection over this period, either through purchase or as outright gifts from the Dieters. However, the most significant donation was the news in 1987 that $150,000 had been given from the Beeson family, with an additional $290,000 expected in future wills, to create a restricted account for the acquisition of missions and evangelism material, which was a passion of Frank Waldo Beeson, the son of John Wesley Beeson, a former president of Meridian College, a holiness institution in Mississippi. The timing of this gift worked well with the starting of the E. Stanley Jones School of World Missions and Evangelism and its aim for Ph.D. level support for research. By 2004, the income from the gift was $30,000, and by 2012 when the gift ended, almost $824,000 had been used for mission material from 1987 to 2012. Mr. Beeson also created a $2 million endowment for the Beeson Library Collections in Pastoral Leadership and Related Interdisciplinary Studies which goes to the purchase of books. In 2021, the income from this endowment was nearly $162,000 and has provided $3.2 million toward book purchases since
1990. In its final form, the Beeson gifts count as the largest single gift to the library to directly impact its collections (with both the gift and endowment the total is about $4 million to date).

As an immediate result of both the establishment of the E. Stanley Jones School and the Beeson gift, a collection of 500 volumes related to missions in the Philippines was purchased from Dr. Gerald Anderson, the director of the Overseas Mission Study Center in 1987, and this was followed the next year with a purchase of 1,100 back periodicals and 300 pamphlets on mission in Southeast Asia. As a result of these events, the B. L. Fisher Library at Asbury Theological Seminary achieved a Ph.D. level collection in the area of mission and evangelism quite rapidly.

In terms of donated items, this decade was also a rich period for the B. L. Fisher Library. In 1984, several significant libraries were given, including the library of Kenneth Eyler of 19th and 20th century holiness material, the library of Dr. Julian McPheeters- the second president of the Seminary, a library of 19th century revivalism books and early material on Wesley from Rev. Walter Price, and the library of Benjamin T. Roberts–the founder of the Free Methodist Church.

1993-2003

As Dr. Faupel entered this next period directing the library at the Seminary, the collection reached some definite high points. In fact, this decade can be considered the historical highwater mark of the library in terms of its collection development. In 1994, the John Carver Healing Collection was purchased, as perhaps the most expensive collection in Asbury’s history. This massive collection, which documents the healing ministries of around 300 healing evangelists of the 1950s, cost $150,000, paid in four installments, but was valued at the time as being worth $250,000. The collection was formally opened on April 18, 1999. Along with the earlier Hannah Whitall Smith Collection, this addition again proclaimed Asbury’s position nationally among religious archives. Other important archival collections came in, including the Papers of E. Stanley Jones (2000), the Papers of David L. McKenna (2000), the Papers of Beverly Carradine (2000), the Papers of United Christian Ashrams International (2001), and the Papers of Dewey M. Beegle (2002).

Several other collections came in as gifts or purchases, including 1,715 books from President David McKenna in 1995. The Bammel Library was gifted in 1998 from Thomas and Alette Eberlein with valuable historical
material in German, French, Italian, and Latin, and an additional 200 books on German Methodism were purchased from Drew University in 2003. Donations of material also continued at a strong pace; however, most donations were the gifts of individuals as had been the tradition of the past. Significant donations came from faculty who retired or passed away including: Dr. William Arnett (346 volumes), Dr. Donald Joy (680 volumes), Dr. Harold Burgess (916 volumes), Dr. Ron Crandall (239 volumes), Dr. John T. Seamands (700 volumes), Dr. Herbert W. Byrne (226 volumes), Dr. Burrell Dinkins (1231 volumes), Dr. Kenneth Kinghorn (116 volumes), Dr. Robert Tuttle, Jr. (1118 volumes), Dr. Darrell Whiteman (1471 volumes), Dr. Matthias Zahniser (1482 volumes), Dr. Paul Chilcote (166 volumes), Dr. Charles Killian (197 volumes), and Dr. Lowell O. Ryan (862 volumes).

A few important gift collections came from sources outside of the seminary including Dr. Dewey M. Beegle whose material included archaeological artifacts from the Middle East, a collection of 1662 books from Bishop James K. Matthews—the son-in-law of E. Stanley Jones, material from missiologist Dr. Norman Thomas of over 1500 items, and a collection of 132 items from noted scholar Professor Thomas Oden. One of the largest gift collections came in over these years from Dr. John Vayhinger, which formed a strong basis for the library collection in Christian counseling. It came to a total of around 4500 to 5000 volumes given over a number of years. Fewer and fewer donated books from individuals were added to the collection as gaps were filled and material added from other collection development approaches, which included a larger budget for purchasing material that took the place of relying on individually donated items.

The issue of technology also became increasingly important in 1997 as Asbury Theological Seminary launched its Virtual Campus and teaching online. More materials had to be located in digital formats; this included a dramatic increase in Interlibrary Loan and in experimenting with mailing books to distance students. While technology was increasingly taking more attention and resources from the library staff, an additional complication arose when Asbury Theological Seminary decided to open a campus in Orlando, Florida, in 1998. This meant there was a need to collect for an additional library. In August of 1999, the Florida Library was opened with some 22,000 volumes being moved from the Wilmore Library. In some cases, the opening of this new campus generated more donations, such as Dr. Burrell Dinkins who donated 625 books in 1999 for the new Florida Library.
2003-2013

In 2003, technology became the driving concern for the Seminary, and Dr. Kenneth Boyd replaced Dr. Faupel as the Dean of Information Services. Dr. Boyd had served as the head of technology since 1981 for the campus, but in August of 2003 the B.L. Fisher Library and Technological Services merged. In the process, the B.L. Fisher Library became more focused on digital materials and meeting the technological needs of library users. The strong academically-minded library staff retired or left for other positions. Dr. John Waters had left earlier, but was followed by the retirement of John Seery in July of 2003 and the relocation of Dr. D. William Faupel and Dr. William Kostlevy to other institutions. This necessitated training a new group of young librarians inhouse which included: Paul Tippey, Jared Porter, Joy Blankenship, and Robert Danielson. In the process, library professionals lost their full faculty standing, which was replaced with a non-voting faculty associate status. The era of full academic integration of librarians with the institution was replaced with a service-oriented model. The physical appearance of the library and its services became more important than the collection itself. Donations of book collections dropped to levels seen back in the 1970s, and purchases of significant collections simply ended. In 2005, the Library did receive a collection of paintings of Dr. Richard Gilmore Douglas, a British artist whose work centered on early Methodist themes, which were primarily used to redecorate the library building.

Within the Archives and Special Collections, new collections were also at a minimum. Some materials came in tied to previous collections, such as the Papers of United Christian Ashrams International in 2008, but few new collections were added. Among the collections which were obtained, the most significant were tied to religion in the former Soviet Union. The Papers of Mark Elliott: Institute of East-West Christian Studies (2005) and the Records of the Russian-American Christian University (2013) form a strong research foundation for this significant historical period. Other significant collections included the Shelhamer Family Papers (2008), the Papers of Gerald Anderson (2008), and the Papers of Roger Hedlund (2010). Both of the latter were significant missiologists, but with the exception of the Shelhamer Papers, little material was obtained related to the Holiness Movement, which was the historic center of the Seminary and the foundation of archival collections.

In 2005, the Seminary also launched a Ph.D. program in Biblical Studies, with a sizable grant from the Amos Family Foundation, and a
portion of this was designated for Ph.D. level collection development in this area. This brought in an important source of financial support for developing a Ph.D. level collection alongside of the Beeson gift which continued to fund the Ph.D. collection in Mission and Evangelism during this period. The Beeson gift was ended in 2012 (although the endowment continued), creating another crisis in terms of the collection and maintenance of Ph.D. level materials in missions and evangelism. These funds, along with the experience and knowledge of Don Butterworth, effectively prevented the growth of the collection from being completely separated from a working knowledge of how the collection was used. The Technical Services side of the Library had been relocated to become part of the Technology side of Information Services during the 2003 merger.

In 2010 Dr. Boyd retired, and the library was once more split from technology services, but it was merged again shortly after Dr. Paul Tippey became the Dean of Library and Technology Services. The period from 2003-2010 had been difficult for the collection in terms of donations, gifts, and purchases. The library did emerge with a stronger understanding of the role of technology, a more modern organization, and a renovated building, but in terms of the collection itself, this was definitely one of the lower periods in the history of the library at Asbury Theological Seminary.

Janice Huber, Information Commons Manager at the circulation desk of the B. L. Fisher Library in 2011

(Used with Permission of the B.L. Fisher Archives and Special Collections)
For the Florida Library during this period, several key events relating to collections occurred after 2010, and included the opening of the Justo González Center in the Fall of 2011. This was part of an emphasis on Spanish language resources, which were housed primarily at the Florida Library from the start of the Florida Campus. This was particularly important for the growing Latino-Latina Studies Program started in 2001. In 2012, the Harry Hoosier Center for Black Studies was also created in the Florida Library as a place to house collections of material related to African-American Studies.

One of the most important donations at the end of this time period was the donation of the KIRTAS KABIS III scanner in 2012. This allowed for the library to be more actively involved in digitization projects involving historic material. The digitization of *The Pentecostal Herald* and books from the Pentecostal Publishing Company became possible, as well as the development of First Fruits Press in 2012, which allowed the library to both publish material and promote material from the historic Holiness Movement globally online.

2013-2023

Under the leadership of Dr. Tippey, the library collection has begun to make a comeback, while still incorporating advances in technology and digital access to information. This decade has been full of challenges, and of course, as the most recent period of time, its role in the history of the library is still not solidified or well understood. Its place in history will be better understood only by future librarians at Asbury Theological Seminary.

In terms of book donations, this last period of our history has seen a continued decline; however, the number of books being donated in the largest collections has increased. The rise of eBooks and the ease of doing research online has led to fewer students and pastors accumulating and thus donating libraries. Most of the donated materials have come from professors who retired or passed away. The libraries of Dr. Don Demaray (2015), President Ellsworth Kalas (2016), Dr. George Hunter (2017), and Dr. Ken Kinghorn (2017) are examples of these important donations. Likewise, donations from Debbie Mostad (2020) and John Paul Vincent (2021) are related collections of materials made during a golden age of print books. One other important collection was the library of British theologian C.K. Barrett (2016) of 2,444 books, for which the library paid $2,000 to cover shipping from England.
In terms of the Archives and Special Collections, the number of significant collections has increased. In 2016 Asbury became the home for the extensive Records of the Institute of Religion and Democracy, including the Presidential Papers of Diana Knippers, documenting the role of Conservative Christianity in American politics. This collection, once again puts Asbury in a place of national prominence in religious archives. Other important smaller collections of significance include the Records of Ichthus Ministries, Inc. (the oldest outdoor Christian music festival—which was made of several smaller collections coming together after the festival ended), the Papers of T. B. Arnold (an important radical Holiness leader) (2017), the Papers of Mabel Lossing Jones (the wife of E. Stanley Jones), the Records of the Indian Springs Holiness Camp Meeting (2021), and the Papers of Ruth Tipton (focusing on mission material from Papua New Guinea) (2020).

However, the most significant collection in terms of the archives has been material related to the Christian Endeavor Society. These collections include the Records of the International Christian Endeavor Society (2016), the Records of the World Christian Endeavor Society (2015), the Records of the Irish Christian Endeavor Society (2018), and the Records of the Texas Christian Endeavor Society (2019). This collection, once processed, will move Asbury Theological Seminary into a world class level of archival collections. Christian Endeavor is still active globally and these collections open the possibility of future collections and researchers far beyond any other collection we currently own. This collection is truly an exciting, significant collection with long-term implications.

Challenges in this period have included the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, with the closing of the library and the campus for a short period of time. This moved the library into a greater focus on digital resources to meet the needs of distance education. It also led to fewer donations and less ability for travel and collecting materials for the archives. Another challenge was the closing of the Florida Campus in 2022, which has also created work in dealing with the Florida Library and moving needed material back to the B.L. Fisher Library and disposing of the remaining volumes. The most recent collection has been the Papers of Dr. Charles Edwin Jones, one of the foremost authorities on the Holiness Movement, which came in late 2022.

The importance of technological librarianship and digital collections is an essential area for providing access to students, faculty, and staff, and so this is rightfully a focus of the modern collection. Making wise
budgetary choices to maintain and grow a collection to support Ph.D. level research is also essential. Yet, increasingly digital material is becoming more and more abundant and available. The real value of any future academic research library is going to lie in its access to unique primary source material found in its archives and special collections. This is the source of Ph.D. dissertations and the draw for high level academic scholars and faculty. The library also functions in a crucial way to help students evaluate and access the right information and not just any information in our modern age with its overabundance of unreliable information. Being able to critically assess information is part of the task, and teaching these skills to students is more essential than ever before. So, while building the collection and providing immediate access is critical, both are really just stepping stones to building a stronger academic community at Asbury Theological Seminary for the next 100 years.

The archives of the B.L. Fisher library are open to researchers and works to promote research in the history of Methodism and the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. Images, such as these, provide one vital way to bring history to life. Preservation of such material is often time consuming and costly, but are essential to helping fulfill Asbury Theological Seminary’s mission. If you are interested in donating items of historic significance to the archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, or in donating funds to help purchase or process significant collections, please contact the archivist at archives@asburyseminary.edu.

End notes

1 All images used courtesy of the Archives of the B.L. Fisher Library of Asbury Theological Seminary who own all copyrights to these digital images, unless otherwise noted. Please contact them directly if interested in obtaining permission to reuse these images.

2 A collection like that at Asbury Theological Seminary is not built by one person, and so this essay is dedicated to the memory and honor of the library directors of the past and present: Lena Barbara Nofcier (1895-1988), Susan A. Schulz (1911-2011), Onva K. Boshears (1939- ), Dr. D. William Faupel (1944- ), Dr. Kenneth A. Boyd (1949- ), and Dr. Paul A. Tippey (1977- ). There are a host of other library workers also responsible for the building and cataloging of this collection to make it usable, but there is not space to list them all here. Yet the collection itself remains as a lasting tribute to their hard work and effort in helping to train “sanctified men and women” for the work of the Kingdom of God.


7 Ernest Edwin LeMaster appears to be a student who graduated in 1947, but it is not clear from the documents when he served in the role of librarian or for how long.

8 Shipps, *A Short History*, 60.

9 Ibid.


11 Ibid., 27.

12 Ibid., 28-29.


15 Schultz served as Associate Director for a short time in 1967-1969 when Onva K. Boshears, Jr. became the Library Director, but she resumed the position when he left.

16 These quotes are from Susan Schultz, the library director as she was preparing to retire in 1978. They are recorded in the 1977-1978 annual library report to the President and Board on page one.


18 The 1977-78 Annual Library Report, Susan Schultz: 3.


Dayton’s works include: *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (1976), *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (1987), and *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage* (2014), among many other articles and papers.

Faupel’s work includes: *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (1996) as well as other important papers and contributions to other edited works.


These papers have been republished by the library’s First Fruits Press and are freely available online: Donald W. Dayton, *The American Holiness Movement: A Bibliographic Introduction* (https://place.asburyseminary.edu/firstfruitspapers/3/), David W. Faupel, *The American Pentecostal Movement: A Bibliographical Essay* (https://place.asburyseminary.edu/firstfruitspapers/5/), David D. Bundy, *Keswick: A Bibliographic Introduction to the Higher Life Movements* (https://place.asburyseminary.edu/firstfruitspapers/2/). It is significant that these three items together have been downloaded about 12,000 times to date, demonstrating the ongoing need for such resources.

This process actually began in the late 1980s with Dr. McKenna’s belief that librarians were not “real” faculty unless they taught classes. Librarians which already had faculty rank were grandfathered in, such as John Seery, but newly hired librarians were not. The idea at the time was that faculty associate levels would be equal to the faculty levels, including pay and privileges, but this was ignored at the time and never spelled out in the faculty handbook, and so when those holding faculty status left (except for the Library Director, which maintained faculty status), professional librarians were effectively reduced to service positions without professional recognition.