



Malcolm Russell

THE 21ST- CENTURY LIBRARY

A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF OUR EDUCATIONAL MISSION

Educators of a certain age may lovingly recall the serious library before the Internet: a central campus location, straight-backed wooden chairs precisely aligned at tables, prohibitions on eating or drinking, and the faint musty smell of stacks of aging books. Students and professors entered the library to find Truth—unless, of course, the subject was clinical or experimental. Accreditors evaluated academic libraries by the number of seats and the size of their collections of books and periodicals.

Behind the classical library lay an unrecognized assumption: Offered the opportunity to come and read, students would do so, assisted by the card catalog and the periodical indices. Today's reality is that the library must serve a much wider spectrum of students, who often arrive ill-prepared for traditional coursework and with little experience in conducting academic research.

Library transformation has been strongly influenced by the Internet revolution. Initially, the Internet seemed to make library books obsolete by offering an array of online resources. However, current research amply demonstrates that high school graduates deprived of library services suffer an academic loss. Although competent at instantly Googling information, today's students often flounder in distinguishing between irrelevant facts and valid research, between truth and falsehood. Deep learning and critical thinking still require deep reading. The library thus becomes even more vital than in the past. While it still provides books and journals, it also must make available eBooks, electronic journals, and academic databases.

As curricular goals shift from memorizing a discipline's facts to accessing and analyzing facts and sources, librarians increasingly are called upon to introduce students to a complex variety of quality sources and to teach them to evaluate sources. Librarians thus strengthen existing courses with specialized instruction, and even teach new courses on information literacy,

whose topics include searching strategies, primary and secondary source material, critical evaluation of information, and strategies to ensure academic honesty.

The library's 21st-century transformation also has moral implications. Adventist school and college libraries must provide student access to the ever-expanding sources of information *within a Christian context*. The Internet magnifies the power of words and images to lure hearts and minds away from faith and offers easy access to violence and depravity. Adventist K-12 schools and tertiary institutions should engage librarians in the struggle to keep the gospel and the Great Controversy central to institutional mission and in teaching students to make wise choices about the images and ideas to which they expose their minds.

Ellen White's assertion that "higher than the highest human thought"¹ is God's ideal impels us to struggle for truth rather than abdicate the field of battle—students' minds—to secular influences. Within Adventism, libraries must remain a place for student discovery, for discerning the difference between truth and error. In the virtual library, guiding student discovery becomes ever more complex, and librarians must play an increasingly direct role in educating students.

Finally, the Internet revolution requires that school and university administrators broaden their understanding of the library's new role. For decades, in difficult financial times, the library budget has been a convenient area to cut because of the assumption that students can refer to older books and periodicals. That option is fast disappearing, since many online subscriptions must be current to access past publications.

The Adventist Accrediting Association's *Handbook*,² while correctly emphasizing in Criteria 7 the need for good collections and facilities, would benefit from more explicit mention of the library's active role in promoting student learning, a necessary response to the transformation of higher education today. In the 21st cen-

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How ALICE Works

ALICE is a volunteer organization managed by a council of library directors from member institutions. Volunteer staff members include the council chair, projects manager, treasurer, and secretary. Andrews University acts as the consortium's fiscal agent. At present, only academic libraries are members. The ALICE council meets face to face annually during the conference of the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians. The rest of the year, business is conducted via e-mail. Databases licensed by ALICE are currently English-language based.

How to Join

Interested library directors from Adventist institutions of higher education should contact the ALICE chair and/or projects manager in writing asking to join ALICE and indicating which database(s) they wish to access. A list of databases licensed by ALICE can be found on its Website. Library directors must be members of ASDAL in order to be considered for membership. The best time to join is during the annual license renewals in the fall.

Even though the landscape of library consortia has changed and many Adventist academic libraries now also belong to other consortia, ALICE remains a vital service to Adventist academic libraries and the students and faculty they serve. ✍



Carolyn Gaskell, M.A., is the Director of Libraries at Walla Walla University in College Place, Washington. She became the ALICE Projects Manager in 2004 after having served six years as ALICE Chair. She has also served on the Orbis Cascade Alliance Electronic Resources Committee and represented Washington state private academic libraries on the state library's Subcommittee on Cost Allocation for the State-wide Database Licensing Project during 2004-2005. In addition, she has authored a number of articles and made presentations at library conferences. This article is updated from one printed by the Journal in volume 67, No. 2.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

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6. "Participating Consortia of the ICOLC," International Coalition of Library Consortia: <http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia/icolcmembers.html>. Accessed January 24, 2011.
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8. Keith Clouten, "Alice in an Electronic Wonderland: Rabbit Hole or Passageway to the Future?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians at La Sierra University, Riverside, California, June 22-25, 1997.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

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tury, library facilities and professional librarians become important indices of the quality of Adventist education. Our schools and colleges must forge a consensus that adequate library budgets, along with trained librarians capable of engaging students in critical thinking, are central to the accomplishment of our mission.—Malcolm Russell.

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at two other Adventist higher education institutions and served as a department chair, assistant dean of a university school of business, chair of a General Education Committee, and Honors program director. Dr. Russell has gained a reputation as a strong supporter of academic libraries.

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1. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1952), p. 18.
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