

ANGEL

AND THE WELL-STOCKED LIBRARY

Quality education requires well-stocked and well-balanced libraries. Seventh-day Adventist schools also need materials that support our distinctive denominational ethic. Selecting and buying library books, and then preparing them for use are specialized jobs that require professional skills not often available in our elementary and secondary schools. The Adventist Network of General Educational Libraries (ANGEL) was developed to improve the quality of libraries in church schools in the Southern Union Conference, which encompasses most of the southeastern United States.

As librarians at Southern Adventist

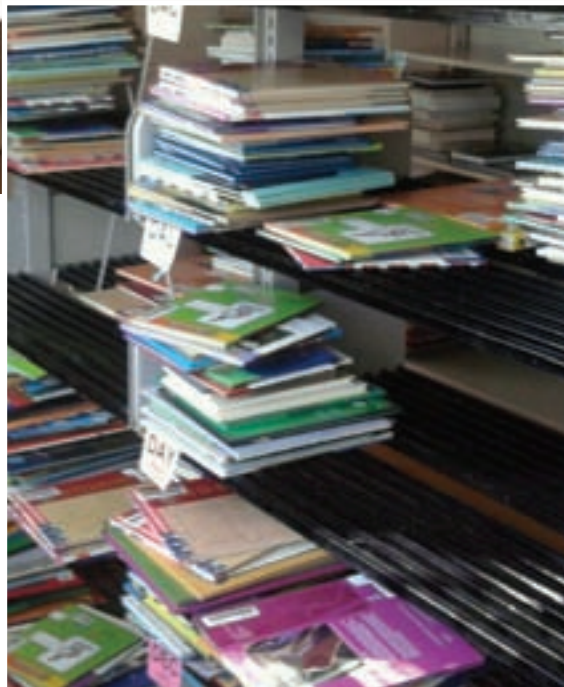
University in Collegedale, Tennessee, sought to improve K-12 libraries in this geographical area, they initiated discussions with the conference education directors. The university librarians concluded that since the ideal of a professional librarian for each school was not attainable, other alternatives should be explored. One alternative was for the university librarians to conduct workshops for the teachers, coupled with marathon cataloging sessions on Sundays in various schools. The librarians—Peg Bennett, the late Charles Davis, Lorraine Grace, and the late Marion Linderman—discovered some unusual books during these sessions. One example was *Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller, which was considered one of the most pornographic books of

its time. The volunteers at this school had cataloged the book as Earth Sciences of South America!

As this example illustrates, onsite visits helped schools evaluate their holdings and needs. In most cases, school libraries used volunteer help or assigned a teacher to tend the library in addition to a full teaching load. Inadequate libraries, student unfamiliarity with the standard cataloging system, and teachers lacking the time or ability to run the library were the main problems encountered. These problems resulted from years of neglect and insufficient knowledge.

Realizing that a trained librarian was needed to help the schools build a

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Top:
ANGEL worker Jodi Herod affixes barcodes to the books before sending them to participating schools.

Inset:
Books awaiting cataloging by ANGEL.

balanced collection, it was decided that the McKee Library staff would add this responsibility to their duties. ANGEL began in 1981 by serving 60 schools in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. My involvement with ANGEL started in July 1982. The success of the program caught the attention of other schools and conferences in the Southern Union. Today, all of the Southern Union conferences participate, with 164 schools currently enrolled in the program.

The services offered by ANGEL include selection and purchase of books appropriate to student age level, ethnic diversity, and interests, and books to support the curriculum. Volume buying gets us discounts unavailable to individual schools. The books are cataloged with a library software program called Surpass using the Dewey Decimal Classification system. A Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC) disk is then generated and provided to schools with an online library catalog. Student workers affix the spine label and barcode, and glue in a pocket and date-

due slips. Schools thus receive books that are ready for students to check out. Every school also has an online catalog that is password free and can be accessed by anyone through the ANGEL Website at <http://www.angelprogram.net>.

In addition to processing new books, ANGEL allows schools to bring in books for cataloging that they have acquired through community gifts or local purchases. Some of these books may be weeded out if they are inappropriate, out of date, or beyond repair.

Those that meet ANGEL selection criteria are mended, processed, and shipped back to the schools.

ANGEL sends a quarterly report to each conference education department showing the total number of books processed unionwide. A separate report shows the number of books cataloged for each school. At the end of the school year, each of the enrolled schools receives a report listing each book, along with author, title, value,

and actual cost of the books purchased for them by ANGEL. The schools also receive book request forms so they can submit specific title requests and compiled book lists.

Judith Rovinger highlights the issues involved in book acquisitions and cataloging when she says, "It takes time and skill to select books that are entertaining (if books aren't appealing, kids won't keep turning the pages), eye-catching, accurate, inspiring, and relevant. There is a lot of junk out there, a lot of mediocre and banal reading material. While these books may have a purpose and a place, a steady diet of mediocrity will not lead our children to excellence. Which of us is willing to settle for less than the best?"¹

As news of the ANGEL program spread, schools outside the Southern Union began to request assistance. The North American Division asked ANGEL to service schools outside the southern United States, and several additional schools are now participants.

ANGEL's financial support comes from the conferences and the Southern Union. Each student is charged a set amount at registration to be used for the school library. Outside the Southern Union, the budget for each school


comes from classroom fees and a registration fee.

The ANGEL program provides library items requested, including books, CDs, DVDs, videos, and eBooks. If insufficient requests come in to deplete each school's book fund, ANGEL will select a balanced assortment of materials for the school with the understanding that its selections are always guaranteed. If the schools receive an unsatisfactory book, it can be returned for exchange or full credit.

Communication with the schools and conference officials is critical to the program's success. Educating the constituency is an ongoing effort, as principals and teachers transfer from one school or conference to another.

"There is empirical evidence that proves that strong library media programs help students learn more and score higher on standardized achievement tests than students in schools with impoverished libraries."² As Adventist educators, we should all be concerned about providing the best reading materials for our students. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any

praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8, KJV). ANGEL can help!

The ANGEL Program, now housed in a property leased by the Southern Union on the campus of Southern Adventist University, is located at 4678 University Drive, Ooltewah, Tennessee 37363. If your school or conference would like to join ANGEL, or you would like more information and forms, check the ANGEL Website: <http://www.angelprogram.net>, or contact Katye Hunt by phone: (423) 396-2546 or by e-mail: khunt@angelprogram.net. 



Katye Hunt has served as Director of ANGEL for the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists since 1982.

REFERENCES

1. Judith Rovinger, "The Bottom Line," *School Library Journal* 49:12 (December 2003):43.
2. Julie Cummins, "Knowledge Navigators," *School Library Journal* 47:6 (June 2001):9.



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