

Future Shock: The Inevitable Impact of a “New Generation of Patron” on Theological Libraries

by

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In the 2004 20th Century Fox film *I, Robot*, starring Will Smith, a detective in the year 2035 is accused of Luddite tendencies because he eschews owning a household robot. In a snappy line of dialogue, Smith's character disavows his technophobia, asserting that he isn't one of those people who seek to banish the Internet in order to bring back the libraries. In this Hollywood glimpse of the future, libraries as physical locations are extinct. By contrast, a slightly earlier film by the same studio, *Star Wars II: Attack of the Clones* (2002), depicts a librarian named Jocasta Nu, who fails to assist Obi-Wan Kenobi in his bid to obtain information about an obscure planet. Books are conspicuously absent in this futuristic archive, but shelf space has been filled by codex-shaped servers that pulse with blue light. Also missing from the building are patrons. For most of the scene, Obi-Wan is alone in his quest for information, though the librarian herself is accompanied by her young apprentice, and when the camera pans back at the end of the dialogue, a pair of gossiping, robed men come into view in the otherwise empty library atrium.

Randy Hensley, a librarian at the University of Hawaii, asserts that the emergence of cyberculture has indeed caused a crisis of meaning and purpose for libraries and that institutions that do not transform and adapt to the new milieu will be eliminated (2003, 23), much as Hollywood envisions in *I, Robot*. Yet, Hensley does not prescribe what a new cyberlibrary might look like other than that it will embrace the presupposition that information is not an artifact but a digital flow that individuals desire to access without the fetters of filters, regulations or physical space (25). By contrast, Norman Stevens recently sketched out a tongue-in-cheek fantasy portrait of the first fully electronic academic library, in which the slogan “no books, no paper” (2006, 12) extended even to the restrooms, which would have paperless toilets/bidets (9), and savings in physical book-processing costs would translate to staff salaries where the minimum starting wage would be six digits.

Stevens' elaborate vision aside, undergraduate librarians are indeed caught in a betwixt and between stage where the majority of staff members still report to work in physical library spaces and oversee blended collections that consist of both digital and paper formats. The changes that are being made at the undergraduate level, though, will have an inevitable impact on student presuppositions about graduate specialty libraries. In just a few short years, the traditional undergraduate who steps into a theological library may find that he or she has entered a foreign land. Undergraduate libraries have diversified their portfolios of services and collections to attract patrons to their physical facilities. So, exploring how Southwestern College, a United Methodist Church-related undergraduate institution, has changed in order to meet the needs of its students may provide some hints as to whether or not a new generation will collide with the structures and missions that drive theological libraries, a phenomenon that might be referred to as culture shock.

The Defining Characteristics of Culture Shock

Most people are familiar with the term “culture shock.” Frequently associated with international travel, Collen Ward, Stephen Bochner, and Adrian Furnham define four

categories of persons most prone to experience “between societies” contacts. Tourists, perhaps the most common group, are those who voluntarily leave their homes for short-term vacations or leisure activities. The next category, that of sojourners, consists of international students, missionaries, soldiers, and business people who are filling contracts or specific assignments for a span of one or more years but who plan to return to their homes at the conclusion of their studies, tour of duty, or project. Immigrants and refugees comprise the last two categories but differ from the prior groups because their stays in a host society involve permanent settlement (2001, 19–25).

In a very real sense, all students at institutions of higher education are sojourners, not just the international students in the populace. Think about it. Schools and the libraries that they support have specific rules, distinguishing traditions, and even quirky physical spaces that must be learned and navigated for successful acclimation to the learning community. Craig Storti defines unsuccessful cross-cultural interactions, or “culture shock,” as those encounters in which “one or more of the parties is confused, offended, frustrated, or otherwise put off by other parties” (2001, 26) or service providers. Often, these clashes occur because rules are unspoken. For instance, the Southwestern College Library does not specifically post a rule that patrons must be clothed. That rule is simply assumed, and thankfully, the need to articulate it has never arisen. Less obvious, for instance, there are unspoken rules about courteous behavior amongst students who are in line to pick up printing, even when they are running late to class. Another implicit custom involves the fact that students are pushed from the building at fifteen minutes before closing time, since the sign on the door really indicates when the employees go home, not when the service desk handles its last transaction. Fine structures, checkout limits, hours of operation, shelving conventions, and the content of the collection itself are all part of the culture of individual libraries that must be learned by new students. When any student makes assumptions about any of these elements based on experiences with another library, the dangers of dissatisfaction and shock are prone to occur. The degree of psychological adjustment necessary to alleviate shock will depend, in large part, on the culture of the library of origin and its distance in terms of technology, collection, services, socioeconomic setting, values, and mores from the library of contact. In other words, the more dissimilar the libraries, the greater the degree of frustration and shock the student will experience. This point is implicit in library literature that stresses that a key role that libraries play is providing services and access to materials that are specific to the academic community that they support (Shuler, 2005, 596; Lincoln, 1997, 66–67). Each library has its own culture. By definition, then, the library is an integral part of a unique community, and outsiders, including new students, may experience conflict before being assimilated into the new society.

Negotiating Culture Shock

Before turning to some of the particularities of Southwestern’s library culture, however, unpacking Storti’s model for successful and unsuccessful cultural adaptation will be helpful. According to Storti, cultural contact is a two-way process (43–44). The goal in a successful cultural exchange is to form a partnership where the student, or sojourner, neither feels like a victim, because he or she is at odds with the new culture, nor does he or she offend the host culture, in this case the library staff. Storti comments that if the subsequent mode of adaptation is for the sojourner to avoid the local culture and at the same time the goal of the local person is to avoid contact with the sojourner (61–63), the cross-cultural encounter has failed. Avoidance

of libraries may take many forms, from the student trying to “create” his or her own personal mini library by relentlessly purchasing bargain basement tomes from the ubiquitous CBD catalog, to abandoning the graduate library resources altogether by “googling” the general Internet. The better remedy than outright avoidance of the new culture, according to Storti, is the necessity for the guest in a new context to change his or her perspective. He comments that negative cultural incidents will stop when the new guest in a given society no longer imposes his or her expectations on the new local culture and as a consequence will no longer be “put off” by it (76). He settles the onus for reaching this state on the sojourner and advocates that the visitor to the culture take the initiative to learn about the new community by observing customs, asking for additional information, or even reading about it (78).

By contrast, Ward, Bochner, and Furnham observe that the pragmatic concerns of academic institutions that rely on tuition revenues to fund operations behoove administrators to take seriously the culture shock of students (145–156). Institutions must play an active role in reducing the anxiety felt by learners. A preliminary step in addressing the sources of student unease related to the library is to determine what elements are causing frustration. Some triggers of these cultural chasms may be identified through the use of customer satisfaction surveys that include open-ended queries such as “The thing that I like most about the library is _____” and its converse, “The thing that I like least about the library is _____.” In some cases, the conflict may be resolved if the institution is willing to adapt, a major premise of a customer-satisfaction model. If economics, facility, or policy concerns prohibit change on the part of the library, then the alternative is for the library to take an active role in smoothing the difficulties of cultural contact by initiating an energetic program of disseminating library policies, rules, and expectations while at the same time assisting students to develop new skills so that they may interact effectively in the library. At times, not only library staff, but also faculty members and student peers may serve as the best means for alleviating library culture shock. A recent OCLC study regarding college students and their perceptions of libraries indicated that that students were more likely to learn about library resources from friends (67 percent), websites (61 percent), and professors (50 percent) than from librarians, at only (33 percent) (2006, 1.9). The Southwestern College Library has a culture that is dictated by its student population, mission, and overarching community. While professors and friends do play a role in students’ acclimation to the library, the librarians do not remain passive. In order to understand the expectations that students may bring to graduate libraries and how libraries might respond, a brief sketch of this culture might be illuminating.

The Culture of the Southwestern College Library

Southwestern is, in many respects, typical of undergraduate libraries that are adapting to the technical realities of the current era. Located in the small rural town of Winfield, Kansas, the library serves approximately 1,600 individual learners, or 800 full-time equivalent students. Only about 500 of these students are associated with the main campus. This resident segment of the population is made up of those of traditional college age (18–22). These traditional students are very savvy with regard to technology, and the physical campus in Winfield is home to a completely ubiquitous wireless environment. One of a growing number of “laptop colleges,” each full-time main-campus student is issued a tablet PC preloaded and configured to the school’s software and hardware protocols and licenses.

The additional 300 FTEs in the student head count constitute the nontraditional learner populace. There are more than 1,100 part-time students with a median age in the mid-thirties. Some of these learners attend distance courses held at store-front-style professional studies centers in Wichita, the outskirts of Oklahoma City, or on one of three military bases. All of these locations are at least an hour's drive from the main campus library. Other learners complete their degrees fully online. Indeed, as Tabatabaei, Schrottnner, and Reichgelt report, the emerging trend is for traditional colleges to offer online courses. By their analysis, more than 2.35 million students were enrolled in online course offerings during 2004 (2006, 401–402), so Southwestern is not atypical. To adequately serve this diverse population, two-thirds of which will never set foot in the physical library, required some imagination. The library, in response, created a culture where technology, academics, entertainment, and concerns about accessibility coalesce. To present the various aspects of this complex milieu, four categories will be helpful: the virtual library, multimedia, accessibility, and the physical facility/collection.

Virtual Library

With a large portion of our student population at remote locations, it became necessary for Southwestern's library to wholeheartedly adapt a virtual-library model. A large impetus for this move was the implementation of six-week course modules for some courses of study. Although distance students may request books from the main-campus library by ringing the library's toll-free number, by submitting e-mails, or by filling out automated online request forms, and requests are happily shipped to them on the same day, distance students rarely make use of this book-request service. They cite lag time in the US mail system and the fact that in a six-week module they may not develop a research topic until week five as the chief inhibitors for using physical main-campus books. Another drawback is the inconvenience students experience in repackaging the books that they have borrowed and actually getting them to the post office to mail them back to the main campus. E-books were the logical solution. Although Southwestern holds 45,891 circulating physical book titles, the e-book collection is catching up. Through a variety of vendors, including Gale, Oxford, OverDrive, and OCLC's Netlibrary, Southwestern owns 16,650 e-books outright and pays annual subscription fees to access an additional 900 books through Cokesbury's iPreach database and the APA's PsycBOOKS. In short, e-books now make up 28 percent of all circulating resources. An even more radical transformation has taken place with regard to paper serials. Full-text holdings in Southwestern's databases exceed 21,000 titles, while the current paper journal collection consists of a mere 115 academic subscriptions.

To support the pastoral studies undergraduate major, which is only delivered in distance formats, then, students have access to 214 full-text religion journals; the rich commentary, theological dictionary, and sermon-helps database iPreach by Cokesbury (www.cokesbury.com/subscriptions.aspx?subSection=34&tipc=9); over 150 e-books on a wide range of topics relative to religion, most published by Taylor & Francis, Brill, and Oxford; and electronic versions of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Gale, 2005) and Oxford's *Encyclopedia of the Reformation*. These last two resources are an interesting study in themselves because they are also owned in print version in the library's main-campus reference room. Yet, usage statistics show that Southwestern's forty-three traditional students who are majoring or minoring in the main-campus Philosophy Religion degree prefer the electronic versions of these encyclopedias to their print counterparts. Although statistics are not available for overall e-book usage in

Religion, due in large part because the iPreach database is not capable of returning user data, a clear penchant by undergraduates at Southwestern for online resources is substantiated in other subjects across the curriculum. For instance, during the Spring Semester 2006, 119 paper books circulated in call letters H–HJ, business subjects. During the same time period, though, there were 2,809 full-text documents pulled from business databases and 109 business e-book accesses.¹ Due to the way usage statistics are calculated by vendors, Southwestern is not able to disaggregate off-campus use from main-campus use. Nonetheless, the dominate preference, regardless of course delivery modality, whether on campus or off, is clearly for electronic resources, particularly those that are available in full text. The predilection of college students for full-text availability as a key influential factor for selecting articles from library databases was confirmed by Clifton Boyer and Karen Swetland (2003, 35) in a survey of undergraduate students at the University of Carolina, Spartanburg.

In a similar study, the OCLC report on *College Students' Perception of Libraries and Information Resources*, the popularity of electronic resources is substantiated by data that reflects that 42 percent of college students use the online databases at least monthly, while only 15 percent report never having employed these resources (2006, 2.5). A limitation of the OCLC survey in regard to these statistics, however, is a lack of correlation between non-database use and other factors. There is no indication, for example, whether the 15 percent of nonusers were technophobic, members of a particular demographic disinclined to acclimate to online sources, economically unable to access technology, or whether students in that respondent pool may have been pursuing courses of study that do not traditionally use electronic resources.

Speaking of demographic trends and online library usage, a word of caution is in order. Mark Stover, in an article published in 1992, remarked that religious studies was a discipline that was in the forefront of making electronic resources available to researchers and that theological librarians were eager to pursue electronic publications (699). While Stover himself did not question the familiarity of users with technology, which in 1992 was predominately delivered via CD-ROM format, Timothy Lincoln expressed concern that since the average age of students entering M. Div Programs in the 1990s had increased, many students “may be unused to the array of electronic bibliographic tools that a religious studies collection may employ” (67). Southwestern’s own experience with populations of varying ages in the new millennium indicates that familiarity with information technology by student age bracket is no longer a concern. Likewise, a more formal study of student perceptions of digital libraries in Milwaukee that was conducted by Alex Koohang showed that overall, university students have positive views about the use of digital libraries and that there were “. . . no significant differences in perceptions among various age levels of the subjects using the digital library in their weekly web-based distance learning assignments” (2004, 624).

That is not to imply, though, that users of e-libraries are completely self sufficient and require no bibliographic instruction, reference assistance, or other support. Even Hollywood recognizes this reality. In the 2002 DreamWorks studio version of *The Time Machine*, the virtual library is complete with a virtual librarian, Vox #NY-114, played by a very urbane Orlando Jones. While Southwestern’s virtual reference and support services are not so polished, they nonetheless play a vital role in alleviating any culture shock and technological glitches, which might be associated with the library’s electronic holdings. A key piece in our virtual library support services involves library use of the campus-wide course-management software,

Blackboard. Each distance student, upon matriculating at the college, is automatically enrolled in a “course” called “The Library.” This appears on every student’s Blackboard “desktop.” Staff uses the library course to administer library surveys, make announcements about new library resources and policies, have an instant e-mail directory to all distance students for purposes of communication, and post and/or link to library instructional materials. Distance faculty members are also enrolled in this “course,” and frequently these faculty members do contact the library for assistance with embedding dedicated links for specific database articles into the individual classes they are teaching. While the version of Blackboard employed at Southwestern is a fairly simplistic edition and not capable of supporting add-on modules (such as the electronic reserves component offered by the Copyright Clearance Center), nor is there sufficient staff to provide formal faculty-wide training on the best means of integrating library resources into individual Blackboard courses, such as is recommended at large institutions like Cornell (Rieger, Horn, and Revels, 2004, 208), the simple expedient of creating the library’s own Blackboard course has tremendously improved the visibility of library services for online learners. Usage statistics indicate that from the period of May 7, 2006, to June 21, 2006, there were 729 accesses of the library Blackboard virtual reference services by distance students. In addition, graphing these accesses reveals the hours in which learners are most active. In this case, the adult students are indeed doing their library research during the workday, presumably at their places of employment, in addition to the early evenings.² This data, in turn, is vital in determining staffing for other virtual library-reference services, such as instant messaging.

To complement its library Blackboard initiative, Southwestern utilizes Microsoft Messenger to offer “live” reference services approximately five hours per week, spread across evenings and weekends. Interestingly enough, use of this service is particular to age and occupation. Learners associated with the military comprise 40 percent of users, high school students taking advanced college placement courses account for another 57 percent, while other nontraditional students account for 3 percent of the patrons who access this service. This distribution is reflective of larger trends amongst library users. The OCLC report on *College Students’ Perception of Libraries and Information Resources* includes the statistic that 75 percent of fourteen- to seventeen-year-olds in the United States have used instant messaging (2006, 5.5), a much larger proportion than with some other age groups.

Anticipating increased demand for virtual reference help, both in terms of Blackboard and instant messaging, Southwestern has been restructuring staff positions whenever attrition provides opportunities to do so. During 2005–06, the library hired its first-part time online librarian. Beginning this July 1, that position will be moved to full time. A unique aspect of this post is that this librarian, similar to the students who are served, works from home. This provides several advantages. First, the library staff member is using the same proxy servers and login protocols to access data as the students, which would not be the case on campus, where access is IP authenticated. Thus, the librarian can easily duplicate and rectify difficulties that the students might have with broken links and firewalls that interfere with the proxy server (a problem that occurs when links are not embedded into individual Blackboard courses correctly).

Second, since the librarian has a flexible work schedule not constrained by concerns about turning out the lights or locking the door at a particular time, online library services may take place evenings and weekends, as is most mutually convenient for both learners and the librarian.

Since the current online librarian is limited to working forty hours per week, flexible though the hours may be, future plans include increasing the hours of online reference services and training the physical library circulation staff on instant messaging so they, too, might assist in online reference. In any event, the e-library and virtual reference services are now a permanent feature of the Southwestern library. And, given patron demand and increased pressure to support distance learning, the e-library is rapidly eclipsing traditional paper resources and on-site library staff. As Dennis Dillon at the University of Texas at Austin laments, "So turn off your computer and take a stroll down to the campus library. Walk through the stacks and begin saying your good-byes to the shelves of printed books. It may not be this year, this decade or even before you retire, but drastic changes in the ways libraries . . . operate are coming, and their effects will extend throughout the academy" (2004, B5). At Southwestern, the students, whether remote or on campus, have made their preferences clear. Electronic resources win hands down. The good-byes may come sooner than one thinks. In the meantime, though, Southwestern has reimagined its main-campus library and has successfully leveraged its policies, services, and collection in ways that have increased student traffic from 75 persons to door counts that now register between 400 and 600 patrons per day.

Multimedia

While a key need for remote users was the development of a virtual library, main-campus students, although happy to piggyback and use the e-library, too, also had a requirement that library staff take seriously the impact of multimedia on the library. During the fall semester 2004, the library staff, in its annual "student satisfaction survey," slipped in a question about whether students listened to music as they studied. With eighty-nine responses to the question, the overwhelming majority, 74 percent, indicated that they did listen to music. Another 17 percent indicated that they did not, while 8 percent affirmed that it didn't matter whether they listened to music or not.³ With those results in hand, the library staff asked themselves a hard question. Was it time to banish the stereotype of the library as a "quiet place?" So, the staff began to experiment. First, every desktop PC was outfitted with headphones. This was a no-brainer. More and more web designers are adding sound to their websites, so the headphones allow students to surf without having to "turn down the volume." Plus, the fact that CD drives are standard in all of the college's computers means that students can bring their own music or check out items from the library collections. In addition, the Naxos music database (www.naxos.com), which the library purchased to support the music department, contains streaming classic, jazz, and world music. Without the headphones, this library resource, ironically, would be accessible only outside of the library.

As part of a second initiative to address the realities of multimedia for patrons who prefer to work on their own laptops, the library purchased about a dozen additional headphones. These were cataloged on the library automation system. Students may check out headphones for use with their laptops in four-hour increments. Circulation statistics show 336 headphone checkouts during the spring 2006 semester. This number, however, may be low. As the headphones had been tagged with beepers to set off the gate system, it is frequently a practice that during busy times, headphones are simply handed out to those requesting them without the formality of actual checkout.

A third scheme, in addition to outfitting desktops with headphones and making headphones available for student checkout, involved, gasp, playing music over the library sound system.

The sound system is a small, portable unit originally purchased for events held in the library that involve guest speakers. Enterprising librarians obtained a CD changer/radio, which they hooked up to the system. To ensure compliance with performance rights, permission was obtained from several local musicians to play their CDs. As well, music created in composition classes on campus or broadcasts of the college's licensed radio station is also employed. This initiative was very well received. Because the sound system is a Fender Passport system, the sound is limited to the main library level. This means that students seeking quiet study spaces (17 percent of the student population, according to our survey) will find familiar library silence in the reference room or in the stacks on other floors of the building.

A fourth aspect of the new multimedia awareness of the Southwestern College Library involved collection development. While maintaining the mission to support academic programming, in the year 2000 the library began collecting DVDs. The core collection, as is frequently the case with media housed in college and university libraries, was inherited from the Mass Communications department (see Walters, 2003). That collection included approximately 400 feature films, most of which were of the popular variety. Presumably, they had been collected with an eye toward analyzing special effects, camera angles, and so forth. A campus donor, learning of this collection, increased it by adding approximately twenty films per month via a "gift in kind" scheme. Many of the titles selected by this donor were new releases. Thus, the collection was born and its character established without intervention or input from library staff. In a way, it was a novel approach to collection development, being the first collection selected entirely by the population that was served rather than the acquisitions unit of the library. Eventually, a collection development policy was established that focused on classic films, international films, documentaries, and items listed by the American Film Institute (top one hundred American films, etc.). But each time the library staff thought that they were tailoring the collection to the exact needs of the academic patron base, the academic unit would throw a curve. The literature department, for example, requested Westerns to support a creative writing class themed around that topic, and the psychology professor selected the salacious *American Pie* (Universal, 2000) for a class on gendering and sexuality. The inability of library staff to determine what video material is "academic," is merely a reflection of a national trend in which feature films are used for instruction (Carr, 2002, 44). This echoes the reality that students born between 1981 and 1986 are "not enamored of the traditional lecture" (Brown, 2005, 41) and professors are using media to engage students in the learning process. To cope with these peculiarities, even though the formal DVD acquisitions policy is still in place, a small line of the Southwestern library budget was set aside to purchase media recommended by patrons, whether they are faculty, staff, or students. This, too, is a very popular service. Furthermore, the impact the media collection has had on library circulation, and, consequently, patronage, has been astronomical. In the spring of 2001, a modest 2,109 items circulated from the collection. By the spring of 2005, circulation was 9,066 items, with 5,234 of those DVD checkouts (on circulation relating to DVDs, see Carr, 46).

It is apparent that DVDs are "in," and the campus appetite for films is voracious. As Rebecca Albitz notes, "Video recordings have, of course, become a staple in almost all academic libraries" (2001, 1), but she worries that there is a need for restrictive circulation policies for media. Currently, the Southwestern library maintains a collection of 2,831 DVDs, which are housed in open stacks in a DVD nook on the main floor near the circulation desk. Security is

maintained by means of video surveillance cameras and the use of CheckPoint acrylic “safer cases,” see-through packaging that allows patrons to read the movie summaries on back and then carry the movies to the circulation desk, where they are unlocked. Faculty members who require specific titles for class instruction can withhold them from general media circulation by either checking them out for a full semester or transferring them to “reserves.” Media reserves have a more restrictive checkout policy, and/or the items must be used in the library. The practice of allowing an open, browsable media section, like the one in place at Southwestern, is becoming more popular with academic libraries (King, 2006). Oddly enough, while browsing the media collection is the norm amongst students, they view browsing the paper stacks with disfavor. Although the etiology of this phenomenon has not been studied in depth at Southwestern, the suspicion is that browsing the stacks for information is a time-consuming exercise antithetical to the immediacy of full-text data search returns via the computer. Librarians are considering leaving the stacks “open” for those who still prefer to browse, but also initiating a retrieval service for students who use the “e-mail this record” feature in the automated card catalog to notify library staff of the items that they wish to pick up as they swing by the library on their way to class. The overwhelming popularity of DVDs in comparison with the paper collection, however, has led to reevaluations of the use of the library facility and even the library mission.

Facility and Mission

In the year 1999, when only a handful of students straggled through the library doors each week, the library director at that time had a vision of a facility filled with students. Coffee would solve all problems and provide the great draw. Thus, he made the radical decision to establish a “Starbucks”-like coffee corner in the library with free coffee. Rolling up their sleeves, library staff auctioned off the old wooden card catalogs on e-Bay and used the resulting funds to purchase used bistro tables and chairs from a restaurant supplier. It never did look like Starbucks, and the coffee, brewed in twelve-cup coffeemakers and left to languish for up to twelve hours in the pot, certainly did not taste like gourmet, but a few students did appreciate the service. Positive feedback was always received on student surveys. Eventually, it was discovered that the secret to success was a hot-water urn that provided a never-ending stream of water that students used to mix cocoa (their beverage of choice and supplied for free through funds obtained by the diligent collection of library overdue fines) or used as key ingredient in mixing instant hot oatmeal and soup, staples in the college diet. The coffee bar set a huge precedent. After it was discovered that the coffee bar did not draw insects (an early fear) and was there was not a single incident of damage to books, all bans against food and drink in the library were lifted, with the exception of the archive/rare book room. That area is locked and only accessible to staff. The archives excepted, librarians reasoned pragmatically that there would be no more danger to books if food was consumed in the library than there would be if students checked out the books to read while snacking on chips and salsa in their dorm rooms. Today, the liberal policy is an integral piece of the library’s success. Joining the coffee bar are snack machines and pop machines, which previously had been in exile outside of the library precinct proper. And students readily bring fast food to the library or occasionally ring for pizza delivery. Southwestern, though, is not atypical of this change in library culture. The Leid Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas was opened in 2001 and from its inception allowed food and nonalcoholic drinks in its general study areas (Starkweather and

Marks, 2005, 26). The Smith Reynolds Library at Wake Forest also has relaxed some of its strictures on food and drink, permitting pizza to be served to students on library "gaming nights," when students participate in computer game tournaments where Halo 2 and other games are projected on screens (Sutton and Womack, 2006, 173–176).

In addition to loosening up the policy regarding food in the library, the staff also examined policies on closing times. It occurred to the librarians that the surveillance cameras that had been installed to provide security for the DVD collection actually provided a panoramic view of the entire reference room and general study area. With the additional, but very modest, investment of a scissor gate that could close off the circulating stacks, and a few movie theater-style plastic stanchion-and-chain barriers, new vistas were opened with regard to hours of operation; the unstaffed twenty-four-hour general study area was born. Students were ecstatic about this service, as they have unlimited access to the library printers (printing is "free," included in the overall tuition payment), a cheerful twenty-four-hour study venue, and, we've been told, a sanctuary when they have fights with their roommates. In the six months that 24/7 access has been in place, there has been absolutely no theft whatsoever. The SC Security staff monitors the surveillance cameras and makes routine rounds. Plus, students have access to a handy emergency phone connected directly to the security office.

Even though food is permitted and socializing is encouraged, traditionally, the Southwestern College Library has been a place of study, the core mission of the library facility. Thus, librarians were horrified to overhear a student ambassador who was leading a tour of campus remark to a young prospective recruit and her parents, "The library is great. You can rent movies for free, just like our personal Blockbuster. Oh, and they have books on three floors, but I don't need them for Sports Management, so I never go up there." Eeks. Had we compromised our academic integrity for settling for some sort of "edutainment?" Eventually, though, we began receiving feedback from other campus constituents that had been silent in the days when the library was myopically focused on supporting the academic unit. Housing, for instance, reported less damage to the dorms, because students were using the movies to alleviate boredom, a systemic problem in an isolated rural community with few amenities for young adults. Retention figures, too, showed a small gain, attributed by some administrators to the usefulness of the media collection in combating the same student ennui. Admissions officers began to use the library as a recruiting hook, pointing out to tuition-bill-panicked parents that the school's DVD collection meant students could save money that otherwise would be dedicated to rental fees. If students' library DVD-borrowing habits are indicative of the rate at which they spend funds at local movie rental outlets (which are essentially pay-per-use libraries in their own right), the savings are substantial. Faculty members checked out DVDs, not only to support their courses, but for a myriad of reasons including the convenience and the central location of the library.

So the library's current stance on "edutainment," which we are defining as the use of library materials for leisure as well as academic purposes (for a more precise definition as applied to the publishing industry, see Ratzek, 1996, 33–38), has been to embrace it. The mission of the Southwestern College Library has been rewritten. No longer is the narrow goal merely to support the coursework of students and faculty research. That goes without saying, and more than 99 percent of the collection budget is dedicated for that purpose. But now there is a broader vision and mission: to provide for the information needs of the academic community,

a community comprised of many more segments than just faculty and students engaged in coursework. The primary vision of Southwestern as a college is “service through education in a world without boundaries.” The library has made a theological decision that it will model to the students an inclusive understanding of the campus “community” by crossing the artificial boundaries between units of the college and helping all residents in the campus culture to assimilate to the Southwestern society. That means we are a library that reaches every facet of the cultural experience as it is embodied in working, studying, learning, and playing at Southwestern.

Prior to recapping some of the salient points about the library culture of Southwestern, an issue must be raised concerning accessibility for everyone in the community.

Accessibility

Students have a wide range of disabilities, the most prominent at Southwestern being dyslexia and ADHD. Having the fundamental hardware in place in terms of extra-large monitors, headphones, and so forth, the library has added text-to-speech software to all of its desktops. This dovetails well with our electronic resources, because e-books, e-journals, e-mail, and general website text may be funneled through the text-to-speech software and converted to audio files. Sensitivity to these disabilities has also driven the need for a very simplistic library webpage. Thus, web design includes a clickable graphic rather than an excessive amount of text, and there are no cascading links, which are sometimes difficult to navigate.

In addition to disabilities, the library is also the first academic library in Kansas to respond to the changing ethnic composition of the Kansas demographic. Beginning with the ‘05–’06 school year, the library staff has translated the majority of our library webpages into Spanish, so that there are now both Spanish and English web versions. While only 4 percent of the current student populace is Hispanic, the library staff doesn’t want to wait until an information crisis occurs, but is seeking to be proactive in providing information access to a diverse population.

That being said, it is time to recap some of the salient points that have been made in this long exposition regarding the library culture at Southwestern. Southwestern has an undergraduate-level library where students, regardless of age or whether their courses are delivered on campus or remotely, prefer electronic resources to any other research format. The information resources we provide demonstrate that the multimedia ethos of society is taken seriously, as is the fact that at least one-third of the students at our institution will not have any opportunity to encounter the physical library. Furthermore, the mission and patron base have expanded to focus on accessibility for the disabled and the largest ethnic population as well as to meet the information needs of the entire community and *all* units of the college, not just the academic unit. Even as the physical library space is becoming popular for purposes of “edutainment,” rules regarding music, food, and twenty-four-hour service have been modified to meet the expectations of the service population. It is a culture where learning matters, but so do people.

Since an attempt was made during this exposition to emphasize that other institutions, not only Southwestern, were making changes along the same lines, one may wonder whether or not undergraduate students will experience “culture shock” when they encounter theological libraries.

Implications for Theological Libraries

Using the basic theories of culture shock established by Sorti as well as Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, the implications for theological libraries may be classified under two categories. The first involves what first-year seminary students will need in order to change their expectations and adapt to graduate research libraries. The second is what libraries will need to do to help facilitate positive cultural contacts. The following list is not meant to be prescriptive, but merely suggestive, as every library, including graduate libraries, has a core culture that is worth preserving.

At the outset, students may need to learn how to locate books in paper stacks. The call number system and shelving conventions may be mysterious to students coming from e-library environments and/or libraries with book-retrieval services. Second, students will need to be sensitive to rules and procedures that may differ from their prior library experiences. In graduate libraries, arriving with foot-long sub sandwiches or playing CDs of one's favorite Christian rock artist at high volume may not be appropriate.

On the side of what libraries can do to help students overcome culture shock, the first order of business is to look seriously at ubiquitous campus-wide wireless computing. If a student has experienced this service as an undergraduate or in his or her home through the clever deployment of a router and wireless hub, but ubiquitous wireless is missing in graduate school, the student will feel like he or she has entered a primitive society. If appropriate, theological graduate schools that do not already have this technology should seriously investigate the feasibility of deploying it.

Second, e-formats and multimedia are the wave of the present, not just the future. In order to avoid a "canon within a canon" syndrome where students will be drawn to whatever is full text or multimedia, not necessarily what is a truly worthwhile resource, acquisitions librarians should be lobbying denominational publishing houses to provide books in e-formats. Further, publishers should be encouraged to distribute e-books, Christian music, and videos, not only via their own websites and through Amazon-using software like Microsoft's e-reader, but also through major e-book distributors and interfaces like OCLC's NetLibrary.

Another implication of modern library undergraduate cultures for graduate-level librarians is the need for libraries to be sensitive to the fact that federated searching and the use of link resolvers in delivering e-content is dissolving boundaries between subjects. Religion students at Southwestern are as prone to find resources on a religious movement in a business database under the auspices of nonprofit management as they are in a resource traditionally associated with religious studies. Thus, stand-alone theological graduate schools should consider, if they have not done so already, linking to state taxpayer-funded databases, if they are available through the state library system. Along similar lines, theological graduate schools at larger universities should make students aware that they have access to the resources of the larger university and, if appropriate, provide links from the theological library's catalog or webpages to the main library.

But the final and most valuable implication is that every library and every school has its own culture. Just as undergraduate institutions are surveying their populations to find the best ways to meet the needs of researchers, students, and staff, so, too, must theological libraries not be complacent in following tradition at the expense of missing an opportunity to make

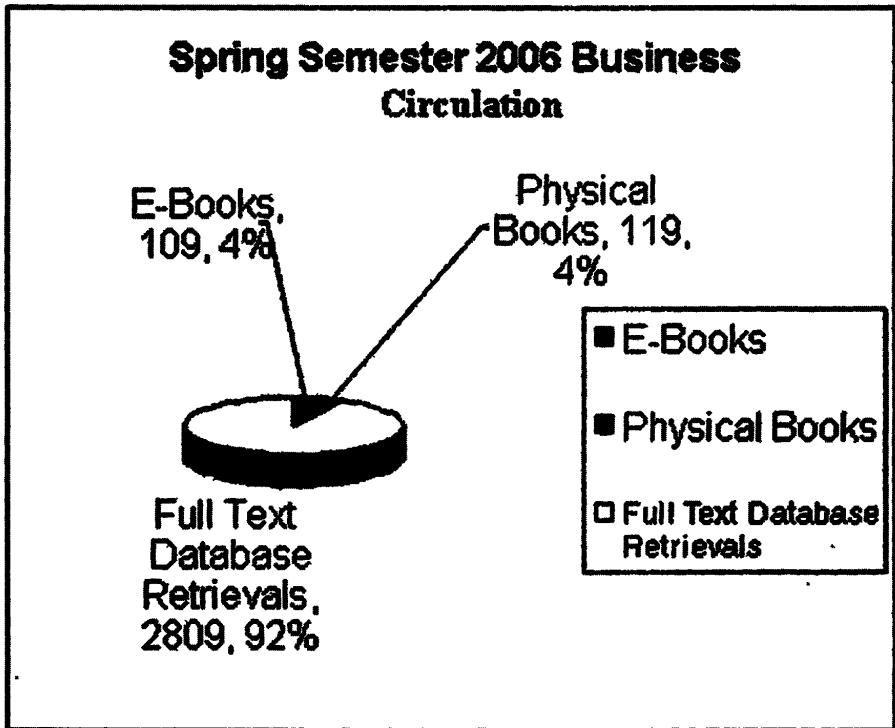
a simple change or adapt a single policy that might make a student's learning experience and transition to graduate school a bit smoother.

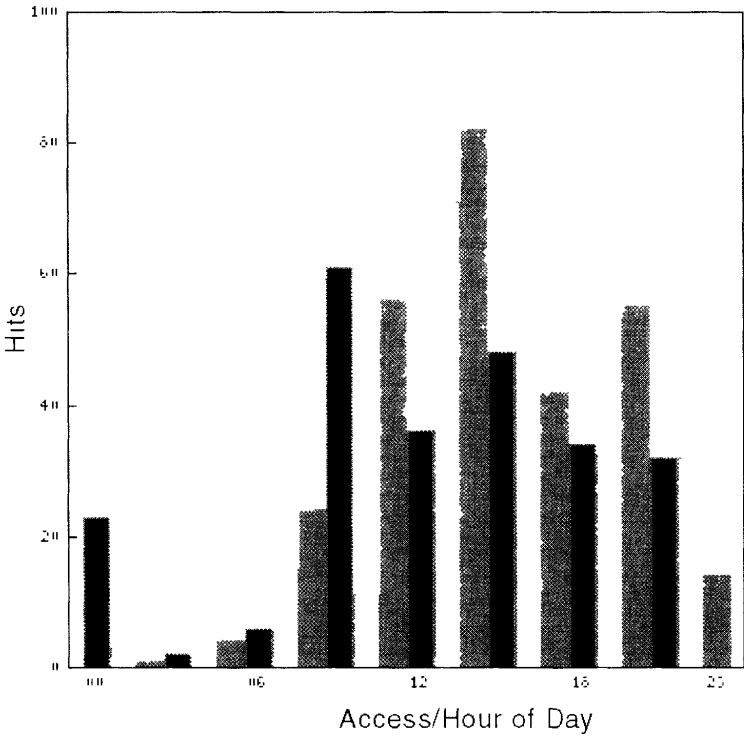
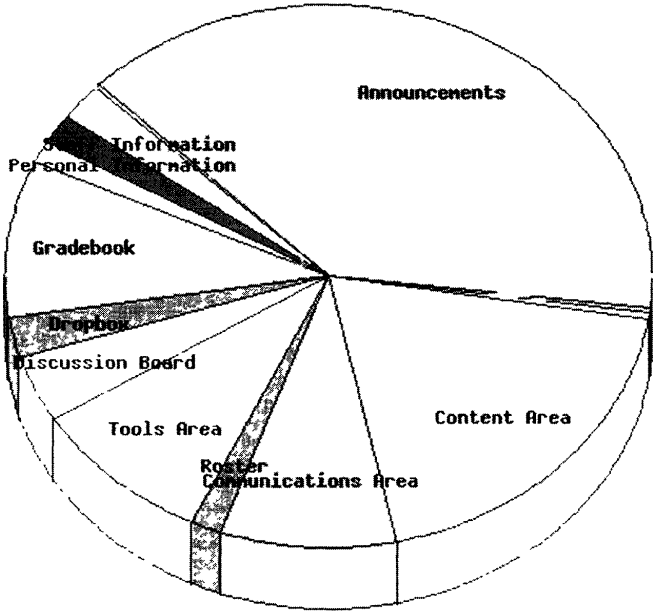
Conclusion

Cultural conflict is an inevitable by-product of diversity. Nonetheless, when and if students are having difficulty assimilating to the culture of a graduate-level theological library, it behooves librarians to respond with sensitivity. This response may take the form of either assisting students to assimilate or to adapt, or, where possible within the confines of the library's individual mission, to lessen the distance between the culture of the prior institution and the new by relaxing policies, unspoken rules, or conventions. Librarians are custodians of the deposit of knowledge, and their chief challenge is to find ways to assist in the transmission of that knowledge to new generations. In essence, they play a vital role in successful exchanges of information and culture.

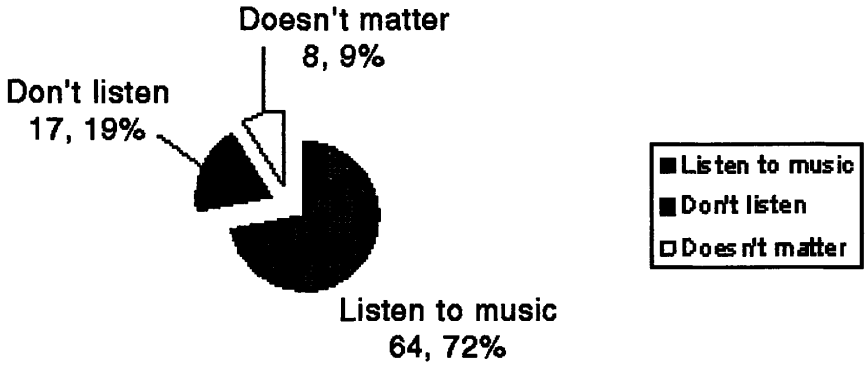
Endnotes

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