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Faith-informed intellectual freedom: an annotated bibliography

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to show perspectives on intellectual freedom from literature that provides approaches for librarians in faith-based institutions. The articles reviewed in this annotated bibliography will assist both Christian and secular librarians in selecting library materials.

Design/methodology/approach – The author identified sources using LISTA, ATLA and other common library databases. Sources were selected from 1993 to the present, focusing on sources that are on the application of intellectual freedom in the Christian academic library and/or librarian.

Findings – Best (2010) discusses censorship in academic libraries based on the top ten most-challenged books in 2007 which have research implications for Christian institutions. Johnson (2002), Davis (2002) and Smith (2004) offer library recommendations based on the review of the literature and their own practice. Hippenhammer (1993/1994) presents survey data and findings on collection development policies and intellectual freedom from Christian libraries. Matacio (2003) shares quantitative research from Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) libraries applicable to other Christian institutions.

Research limitations/implications – The majority of the research on intellectual freedom and Christian librarianship is from 10 or more years ago.

Originality/value – This annotated bibliography is a starting point for research that could be conducted to help in the evaluation of Christian academic library's collection development policy.

Keywords Academic library, Religion, Collection development, Freedom of expression, Intellectual freedom, Faith integration

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to show perspectives on intellectual freedom from literature that provides approaches for librarians in faith-based institutions.

Best (2010) discusses censorship in academic libraries based on the top ten most-challenged books in 2007, which have research implications for Christian institutions. Johnson (2002); Davis (2002) and Smith (2004) offer library recommendations based on the review of the literature and their own practice. Hippenhammer (1993, 1994) presents survey data and findings on collection development policies and intellectual freedom from Christian libraries. Matacio (2003) shares quantitative research from Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) libraries applicable to other Christian institutions.

Methodology

To identify resources for this annotated bibliography, the author used Library, Information Science, and Technology Abstracts (LISTA), ATLA, Christian Periodical Index and several EBSCO databases. She also browsed *Christian Scholars Review* and *Christian Librarian*. Keywords include intellectual

freedom, privacy, freedom of expression, freedom of access, library bill of rights, religion, Christianity, faith, faith integration, academic library, university and college. Her initial goal was to focus on research articles and not simply opinion pieces or survey literature. She found that the results were insufficient and has therefore, included two studies by Hippenhammer (1993, 1994) that, while older, provide important information for scholars on this topic.

Articles and book chapters

Best, R. (2010), "Censorship or selection? Academic library holdings of the top ten most challenged books of 2007", *Education Libraries*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 18-35.

Best addresses censorship and selection in academic libraries and this can apply to a faith-informed intellectual freedom policy. Best (2010) says academic libraries "often serve as the protectors of challenged books".

The author analyzed WorldCat online database for challenged books in 2007 and found that almost 30 per cent of academic libraries have challenged books in their collection. Best (2010) analyzed the 2007 top ten challenged books[1] and found that the publication ranged in dates from 1884 (*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*) to 2005 (*And Tango Makes Three*).

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Several of the author's colleagues, including Maria Pacino, Liz Leahy, and Sue Aspley, have spent considerable time giving her suggestions for rewrites, editing and encouraging her to keep going when she wanted to give up.

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Most collections in academic libraries are driven by institutional mission, values, and curriculum. Best (2010) shares his view that intellectual freedom in the university library is protected by the first amendment of the US Constitution:

The acquisition of challenged books by academic libraries reinforces the concepts of intellectual freedom by supporting the mission of higher education to promote individual enrichment and community engagement.

In both Christian and secular academic institutions, librarians need to continually examine curriculum to ensure that materials selected support the needs of students and faculty. This issue is also addressed by Johnson (2002); Davis (2002) and Smith (2004).

Johnson, J.R. (2002), "A Christian approach to intellectual freedom in libraries", in Smith, G.A. (Ed.), *Christian Librarianship: Essays on the Integration of Faith and the Profession*, McFarland, Jefferson, NC, pp. 139-164.

Johnson (2002) defines intellectual freedom from a Christian perspective as "moral rights" based in scripture, which includes the right:

- "of the individual to hold any belief [. . .] on a subject" including the rejection of truth";
- "to seek knowledge through the study of divine revelation and/or natural phenomena";
- to understand the pursuit of truth better through the communication with others; and
- to obtain information on the pursuit of truth.

He proposes a Christian approach to intellectual freedom, focusing specifically on Christian schools and academic libraries; however, he encourages all Christian librarians to evaluate different approaches. Most importantly, he encourages the community of believers to examine the role of one's faith regarding intellectual freedom (Johnson, 2002).

Johnson (2002) states that Christians should view intellectual freedom as the freedom to pursue truth in a community, which "allows for a pragmatic, democratically developed social right to freedom of expression in a larger society". Johnson is critical of the American Library Association's (ALA) stance on intellectual freedom in the Library Bill of Rights (LBR)[2] because of "individualistic", "relativistic", "anti-religious" prejudice and ideology. He implies that the ALA's LBR seems to go against its own policy and encourages censorship of other views, instead of the Christian perspective.

To further advance his point, he presents three definitions of freedom beginning with the biblical concept of freedom: "freedom to serve God"; this applies to all freedoms including intellectual freedom. The next freedom he describes is the "freedom to pursue truth" which he calls "God's knowledge of reality". Finally, Johnson views ALA's concept of freedom as limited and driven by liberal individualism and his belief that their concept of truth is no longer rooted in God.

Johnson (2002) offers eight considerations of a faith-informed approach to intellectual freedom's application to library practice:

- 1 biblical teaching informs social interactions with non-believers;
- 2 intellectual freedom is a "means of enabling individuals and communities to better understand and apply truth";

- 3 membership means that "communities have a right to define and require their understanding of truth as a condition of membership";
- 4 LBR's philosophical foundation of intellectual freedom seems flawed, but some principles apply to publicly funded libraries;
- 5 Christian institutions should "seek to understand and engage others with diverse viewpoints";
- 6 rather than censoring, Christian librarians should promote a faith-informed approach to intellectual freedom;
- 7 when one applies the definitions of censorship in the Intellectual Freedom Manual [IFM], there may be times for legitimate censorship in some libraries; all libraries censor in one way or another. The IFM[3] implies that censorship is storing "older, worn-out materials in a special collection accessible only to users who have obtained a key"; and
- 8 all of the ideas above, point to the need for a well thought-out collection development policy that includes "selection and retention", "storage", "availability", "use of materials" and a complaints procedure.

Davis, D.G. Jr (2002), "Intellectual freedom and evangelical faith", in Smith, G.A. (Ed.), *Christian Librarianship: Essays on the Integration of Faith and the Profession*, McFarland, Jefferson, NC, pp. 131-138.

Davis (2002) takes the stance that intellectual freedom should be embraced by Christian librarians because of their "belief in the sovereignty of God and acceptance of all truth as God's"; therefore, Christian libraries should collect materials that address controversial topics and faith and life integration, which are "secular, broadly Christian, and evangelical".

Davis (2002) defines intellectual freedom using the ALA definition from the IFM[4]. Focusing on the "freedom of the mind", he shares his views on censorship based on Asheim (1983). Davis (2002) believes that rather than approaching censorship with an attitude of negativity and objection, selectors should seek the positive features that go beyond minor objections. He contends that all libraries, secular or private, have publicly funded collections. However, funding for Christian libraries comes from other sources. Davis seems to imply that Bible college librarians have not done their homework in their application of intellectual freedom.

Davis (2002) attempts to persuade evangelicals to support intellectual freedom and provides three outcomes and four implications for Christian college libraries. He states that as all truth is God's truth, we should have nothing to fear. Essentially, when we do not embrace intellectual freedom, we are limiting ourselves and the students we serve "to avoid serious thinking" on Christian campuses. The outcomes direct the Christian librarian toward a faith-informed intellectual freedom. Librarians should be able to make selection decisions confidently, "convinced of God's ultimate sovereignty". He writes that Christian librarians should be concerned with the needs of all patrons. He suggests that by "recognizing personal biases and blind spots of appreciation, such a librarian can humbly and without shame select materials for all". Based on these outcomes, librarians should consider the following questions when selecting materials:

- “What are taboo subjects in your college?”
- “Are you representing the best examples in the spectrum of thought” (i.e. secular, broadly Christian and evangelical)?
- “Given the goals of your institution, are you contributing to produce a carefully thought out worldview with integrity?”
- What is your role at your institution, a “bibliographical warehouse” or “intellectual provocateur” (Davis, 2002)?

Davis provides another way of thinking on faith-informed intellectual freedom. The questions posed should be addressed by all libraries and librarians (not just Christian ones) as they make selection or deselection decisions.

Smith, G.A. (2004), “Intellectual freedom and the Bible college library”, *Christian Higher Education*, Vol. 33 No. 3, pp. 241-259. doi: 10.1080/15363750490433269.

Smith (2004) advances the discussion of Davis (2002) and Johnson (2002) by focusing on Bible college libraries (defined as undergraduate institutions). He agrees with Davis’ and Johnson’s views by pointing out other studies dealing with censorship and intellectual freedom in Christian institutions, such as Hippenhammer’s (1993) study.

Smith (2004) addresses Johnson’s (2002) ideas on the incompatibility of LBR’s concept of intellectual freedom but concludes that these contentions do not apply to Bible colleges because these institutions should only select resources that support their moral and doctrinal views. He also offers a theological, educational, and pragmatic rationale for his view of intellectual freedom in the Bible college library.

Smith (2004) suggests ways in which Bible college libraries can apply a mission-oriented philosophy of intellectual freedom to manage collections and access because “the library’s information access practices are inherently intertwined with the institution’s educational philosophy. Denying access to materials without sufficient justification diminishes the value of the institution’s academic programs”. However, there is a delicate balance as library resources also play an important role in students’ character formation. He makes the following practical suggestions: collecting a broad range of materials that fit the institutional mission (which is different than a non-faith-based institution); having a written selection policy with a statement on intellectual freedom related to the institutional mission and values; and including a clear statement on handling censorship issues. Finally, he suggests libraries enlist teaching faculty to help draft the intellectual freedom policy.

Smith (2004) shares several examples of the different types of topics that may not necessarily have religious authors but that have an application to a theological or biblical perspective, such as “linguistic, archeological, and historical insights”, philosophy and other disciplinary focuses such as “psychology, biology, and physical science”. Church ministry, another area of focus in faith-based institutions, may build on authors’ works in “communication, education, psychology, sociology, music, anthropology, etc.” (Smith, 2004).

Hippenhammer, C. (1993), “Patron objections to library materials: a survey of Christian college libraries, part I”, *The Christian Librarian*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 12-17.

Hippenhammer (1993) presents the first set of findings from a survey sent to conservative (including Protestant liberal arts colleges and Bible colleges) Christian colleges in the USA

and Canada in 1993. The survey questions addressed policies and procedures for handling objections; the LBR; examples of controversial material; and a definition of intellectual freedom. Similarly to Smith (2004); Johnson (2002) and Hippenhammer (1993) feels that there is a “dual nature of freedom” regarding the view of intellectual freedom promoted by the ALA. Therefore, he wanted to explore the perspective on censorship.

Hippenhammer (1993) received 91 responses from 122 surveys; of the surveys, 67 per cent were from protestant liberal arts’ colleges and 33 per cent from Bible colleges. After analyzing the responses, he found that only half of the libraries surveyed had written policies and procedures for handling objectionable materials. Most of the time, the final decisions were left to the library director or dean. It is interesting to note that over 50 per cent of the librarians reported no challenges. Those reporting challenges stated that 84 per cent of the objections came from students, followed by library staff and professors. Hippenhammer also noted that even though a policy and procedure was in place, many librarians did not follow it and removed the materials in question from the collection. Most librarians reported that they selected materials which could be considered controversial.

Hippenhammer (1993) reported that the majority of the librarians surveyed supported the ALA’s LBR and that there were a variety of views concerning the definition of intellectual freedom. Most librarians in the study seemed to view the LBR’s definition as appropriate; however, 11.7 per cent said that they would “measure ideas against the Bible” such as “freedom to pursue truth within Biblical standards for truth, as opposed to freedom of expression without bounds” (Hippenhammer, 1993). Some specific objections to the LBR include: meeting rooms are generally not available to the public; LBR is not the ultimate authority; and the biggest objection to several of the LBR statements is related to the collection – namely, academic libraries are different than public libraries which means that curriculum is the focus, not best sellers, etc. More than 40 per cent of faith-based libraries state that pornographic materials have been challenged the most. Hippenhammer (1993) believes that most librarians do not know the difference between selection and censorship. In selection, types of materials or topics are not ruled out from the beginning, but instead all content is examined against curriculum needs. Hippenhammer (1993) recommends that faith-based institutions should add materials based on “social, educational, and moral value” which is not necessarily the beliefs of the faith-based institution. He encourages the explanation of intellectual freedom during library instruction to educate students on the topic. He ends the article with recommendations for further research and suggests a study on intellectual freedom for all institutions, not just Christian institutions.

Hippenhammer, C. (1994), “Patron objections to library materials: a survey of Christian college libraries, part II”, *The Christian Librarian*, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 40-47.

The first section of Hippenhammer’s (1994) article is a list of censored materials with controversial subjects such as sex, homosexuality, violence, satanism, new age, witchcraft, occult, cults, religion and theology, explicit language, and evolution, in which he then discourages faith-based libraries

from engaging in censorship. Hippenhammer (1994) suggests that these types of materials should be added even though they may be contrary to the institutions' religious beliefs to offer students differing perspectives as they pursue their own search for truth. In addition to these materials, faith-based institutions automatically collect materials on a specific denomination or religious focus of the particular institution. Given this list, it is imperative that libraries have a written policy, procedures and a reconsideration form to address these challenges (an example of these documents is a part of his article). As previously stated in the Davis' (2002) annotation, it is important that librarians look at materials from a selector's perspective versus a censor's point of view.

Part of the article includes an intellectual freedom policy adopted from a number of institutions. He adds that the selection policy should include: the library's definition of intellectual freedom (may or may not include LBR but should also be mission specific); censorship based on a biblical worldview; an affirmation statement with principles for collecting controversial materials; a process for addressing challenged materials; and the library's responsibility to support university scholarship (Hippenhammer, 1994). A sample reconsideration form is included in his article to encourage Christian libraries to develop selection policies.

Matacio, L.R. (2003), "Intellectual freedom: challenges and responsibilities of Seventh-Day Adventist academic libraries", *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 171-192. doi: 10.1080/10656210309484950.

Although Matacio's (2003) article focuses on SDA academic libraries, it is relevant to all Christian academic libraries. This quantitative research study describes the way SDA library directors defined intellectual freedom in relation to their faith. Matacio emphasizes that faith and learning in Christian education "grounds students in the basic beliefs of Christianity, but also enables them to become independent thinkers who are free and able to continue a lifelong search for truth", including access to diverse resources from multiple viewpoints. She uses a theoretical framework for developing a faith-informed collection development policy in relationship to intellectual freedom and Christian education, a library's mission, literature evaluation and Internet use.

Matacio's (2003) survey asked five questions of SDA academic library directors:

- 1 "How do SDA librarians define intellectual freedom?"
- 2 "What policies and procedures are used to resolve challenges to library materials?"
- 3 "How do the policies and procedures of SDA libraries compare with the policies and procedures of other Christian academic libraries?"
- 4 "What are the censorship experiences of SDA libraries?"
- 5 "How do the censorship experiences of SDA libraries compare with the experience of other Christian academic libraries?"

Matacio also looked at Hippenhammer's (1993 and 1994) surveys (identified above) to compare policies with other Christian academic libraries.

Matacio's (2003) survey included a sample of 60 SDA library directors from 20 different countries, of which nine (29 per cent) were from North America. The institutions' size ranged from 500-2,000 students. She received a 52 per cent

response rate on her 18 yes/no, multiple choice or short-answer questions. Matacio's (2003) study indicated that 55 per cent of library directors viewed intellectual freedom as the "unrestricted access to materials representing both sides of the issue", and that only 19 per cent believe that intellectual freedom is defined by the goals of the institution (22 per cent did not respond to this question). Matacio's article also presents data on selection policies and procedures for handling challenged materials. She found that a significant number of SDA libraries have a written collection policy; this was confirmed by Davis (2002); Johnson (2002); Hippenhammer (1993, 1994) and Smith (2004) who agreed that a written selection policy and a procedure for handling challenges is essential. In addition, Matacio (2003) found that the majority of the objections were from library staff and students because of different religious beliefs or offensive language. SDA libraries kept fewer challenged materials than other Christian libraries.

In her recommendations, she suggests that a library should have a board-approved collection development policy and procedures for handling challenged materials, rather than leaving these decisions to the library director (which often seemed to be the case according to her survey results). She states that it is essential that libraries follow their policies and procedures to be fair to all involved. This will help them "stand behind selection policies and risk criticism from conservative groups and individuals to maintain diversity in their collection and support intellectual freedom" (Matacio, 2003).

Summary and example

Smith (2004); Johnson (1981) and Hippenhammer (1993, 1994) would redefine intellectual freedom for faith-based institutions rather than support LBR's view. Davis (2002); Best (2010) and Matacio (2003) all support LBR's view of intellectual freedom by encouraging faith-based libraries to select materials with varying viewpoints and contexts, upholding intellectual freedom in their institutions. Overall, it seems that libraries have embraced intellectual freedom in some way or another, but may not strictly endorse LBR's view completely. Intellectual freedom should allow students to struggle with and find truth while developing a Christian worldview. Holmes (1975), a prominent Christian philosopher and Professor emeritus (who has written on faith integration topics in higher education), explains that all truth is not just revealed in Scripture, but truth is continually being discovered through God's hand in our world. He goes on to say:

[...] if all truth is God's truth, we must first be free to explore it [...] our task is to interpret it as such by developing Christian perspectives in the natural and social sciences, and the humanities.

Following Davis' approach to intellectual freedom, the writer of this article (a subject specialist to the graduate nursing programs) demonstrates the selection of materials to meet the needs of the curriculum from a Christian perspective and books that present other religious and contentious issues. Some examples of book titles selected with a Christian perspective to healthcare include "Religion, Religious Ethics, and Nursing" by Fowler M., and "Spirituality in Nursing: Standing on Holy Ground" by O'Brien M. (see footnote for more examples)[5]. In addition to resources that follow her institution's faith tradition, she also selects books that might

not necessarily have those specific faith tradition or may be controversial among faith-based libraries such as “Judaism and Health: A Handbook of Practical Professional and Scholarly Resources” by Levin J. and Prince M., “Contraceptive Technology” by Hatcher R., and “Religious Therapeutics: Body and Health in Yoga, Āyurveda, and Tantra” by Fields G. (see footnote for more examples)[6]. Even though she may not agree with a topic, her goal is to provide resources that present different perspectives on a topic that will benefit the library users in the pursuit of knowledge and truth so that they can respond to it.

The author of this annotated bibliography hopes that the articles reviewed will assist both Christian and secular libraries as they create an intellectual freedom policy that will be sensitive to institutional needs and fulfill their roles as upholders of intellectual freedom when they select materials in all contexts. She also recommends further research on intellectual freedom and Christian librarianship.

Notes

- 1 See www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/21stcenturychallenged/2007 for the full list.
- 2 www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill
- 3 www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=interpretations&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=31868
- 4 “. . . the right of any person to hold any belief whatever on any subject, and to express such beliefs or ideas in whatever way the person believes appropriate. . . the right of unrestricted access to all information and ideas regardless of the medium of communication used” (*Office of intellectual freedom*, 1983).
- 5 “Servant Leadership in Nursing: Spirituality and Practice in Contemporary Health Care” by M.O’Brien; “Commitment and responsibility in nursing: a faith-based approach” edited by B. Cusveller, A. Sutton, and D. O’Mathuna; “Nursing as a spiritual practice: a contemporary application of Florence Nightingale’s views” by J. Macrea; “Called to Care: A Christian Worldview of Nursing” by J. Shelley and A. Miller; “Cutting-Edge Bioethics: A Christian Exploration of Technologies and Trends” by J. Kilner, C. Hook, and D. Uustal; “On moral medicine: theological perspectives in medical ethics” by M. Lysaught; and “Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped and the Church” by S. Hauerwas.
- 6 “Oxford textbook of spirituality in healthcare” by M. Cobb, C. Puchalski, and B. Rumbold; “Bad Faith: When Religious Beliefs Undermine Modern Medicine” by P. Offit; “Spirituality in nursing: from traditional to new age” by B. Barnum; “Narratives and Jewish Bioethics” by J. Crane; “American Catholic hospitals: a century of changing markets and missions” by B. Wall; “Health and ritual in Morocco conceptions of the body and healing practices” by J. Dieste; “Medicine in the Qur’an and Sunnah: an intellectual reappraisal of the legacy and future of Islamic” by U. Adamu; “Buddhist Biology: Ancient Eastern Wisdom Meets Modern Western

Science” by D. Barash; “Clinical Handbook of Chinese Medicine” by B. Xu and C. Yuan; “Contraceptive Revolution” by E. Diczfalusy; “Understanding Homosexuality: Its Biological and Psychological Bases” by J. Loraine; “Health of Sexual Minorities: Public Health Perspectives on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Populations” by I. Meyer and M. Northridge; and “Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender ageing: biographical approaches for inclusive care and support” by R. Ward, I. Rivers, and M. Sutherland.

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Further reading

- Ingolfsland, D. (2009), “Books on the historical Jesus as a test case for selection bias in American academic libraries”, *Journal of Religious and Theological Information*, Vol. 8 Nos 1/2, pp. 1-12. doi: [10.1080/10477840903308213](https://doi.org/10.1080/10477840903308213).
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