

## *The Bethany Libraries*

Or “Shsh...Library Zone

The library is the heart of a college campus. It may not be the source of constant hum of activity, nor is it generally a place where large crowds of students congregate for social activity. But the library is central to the existence and the mission of a college, since it is the depository for the wisdom of the past and present, in books, the arts, reference works, journals, research tools, and all else necessary for the academic enterprise, for training in professions, for spiritual life, for the life of the mind — for the well-rounded life in this world and the next. The history of the Bethany College library is in large part a history of the college’s academic development.

The Bethany Ladies College had a library, but we don’t know so much about its beginnings and development. In 1927, Bethany Lutheran College, a co-ed high school and junior college inherited that library and in the following decades it was expanded to meet an expanding mission. When the synod and its college was given the theological libraries of several pastor-theologians, it was well positioned in 1946 to add a theological seminary to the campus. Later, in the 1960s, big change in its library facilities helped the college to achieve regional accreditation, and in the 1990s, another expansion aided the college in becoming a baccalaureate institution, a four-year college.

The fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 dedication of one new library and the twentieth anniversary of the 1998 library that accompanied the beginning of four-year programs give us a good platform to look back on development of library services at Bethany Lutheran College.

In 1967 the library was moved from a suite of two rooms on the ground floor level of Old Main to its first new building. The room, in the north wing of Old Main and on the west side

of the building (overlooking the valley), today houses the security office and a computer lab. Formerly, the library occupied all of that space in addition to a librarian's office/work room just to the south of the reading room.

The little we know about the beginnings of that library is that when the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) took over the operation of the Ladies College, there was a library of about 2500 volumes. Nothing is said about it in the Board of Directors minutes of Bethany Ladies College between 1911 and 1919. We do know that sometime about 1915 the students requested a reading room with newspapers and magazines. Occasional references in the Ladies College faculty minutes record the faculty's approval or disapproval of periodicals suggested by the students.

In September, 1916, the faculty asked the president to appoint a committee to plan for cataloging and managing the library, and soon the committee was made permanent, and the committee was authorized to purchase a card catalog (this may be one of the desktop catalogs that were once in the seminary library). It is possible that the reading room occupied one of the two large reception rooms just off the main lobby. Later we learn that in 1916, the faculty debated whether the library should be organized according to the Dewey Decimal system, which in 1915 was not all that old (first published in the 1870s). They opted to use a different system, apparently home-made, or a simple alphabetical system. It seems likely that at some point before the 1920s, the ground floor room on the west side of the north wing was used as the library. Architect Albert Schippel's original drawings had designated that space in the north wing as a college museum, while the room later occupied by the Synod Memorial Library in the south wing was to be an art gallery.

By the time the Ladies College failed and the property was purchased by the Bethany Lutheran College Association of the Reorganized Norwegian Synod, and then by the synod (1926 and 1927), the library contained 2500 books. The faculty minutes in the years before indicate that books were added from time to time. But the resources were meager.

Under new ownership of the Norwegian Synod, the 1926-27 *Catalog of Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota* date's itself as the "Fifteenth year" and announces classes for the 1927-28 school year. The catalog gives this description of the buildings and equipment:

The Administration Hall is a large, beautiful fire-proof building of pressed brick and stone. It is divided into North Hall and South Hall. On the first floor are located the college offices, a large reception room, a book supply room, several class-rooms and teachers' studios, a suite for the dean of women, and several living rooms for other members of the faculty.... On the ground floor are the gymnasium, the swimming pool, and store-room, the laundry and drying rooms, the kitchen, the home economics room, the student library, the Hvale Memorial Theological Library, a work-shop, and baths and showers.

Now there are two libraries. What was the Hvale Library?

#### *The Synod Memorial Library*

Nils P. Hvale was a pastor in the old Norwegian Synod. He retired in 1919 and was a pastor emeritus in Minneapolis until his death in 1926. We learn how this library came to the college from a letter in Norwegian from Pastor Christian Anderson to Holden Olson. Both were founding members of the Reorganized Norwegian Synod (ELS), but Olsen had become president of the failing Bethany Ladies College even before the synod had an interest in it.

Anderson writes:

Rev. Hvale died Friday March 26 after 10 week illness at the Fairview Hospital. It was left with me to arrange the funeral, which was held in my church Tuesday Mar. 30<sup>th</sup> Two of the sons were present. His books (that are not taken by the children) are left to our synod.

Hvale, born in Norway in 1850, emigrated to the U.S. in 1869. After teaching in public schools in Iowa and Wisconsin, and studying Hebrew, Greek, and theology with tutors, he

attended Luther Seminary for one year and was ordained in 1909 — at the age of 59! He retired in 1919, and while he apparently remained a member of the merged Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, later ELC, he had made Fairview Lutheran Church in Minneapolis (Christian Anderson, pastor) his church home. The Bethany Lutheran College Association which purchased the college in order to hold it until the Synod could take it, was formed just a few weeks after Anderson wrote to Olson. Anderson was a member of the Association but not one of its officers. The minutes of neither the Association nor its trustees during the next years contain any references to the Hvale, though it is mentioned in the Bethany Catalog for the next school year.

In any case, the library was first called the Hvale Memorial Library. The next acquisition of note was the library of J. A. Ottesen. Ottesen had been one of the founders of the old Norwegian Synod in 1853, and had been very active in directing its theology, editing its church paper, and shepherding a far flung parish at Koshkonong, near Madison, Wisconsin. He died before the 1917 merger, but his daughter Hannah, who had cared for her parents in their last days, was a friend of the ELS, and had a cousin who was a member of the synod clergy — Pastor Herman A. Preus of Calmar, Iowa a grandson of the Herman A. Preus who had been a founder of the original Norwegian Synod. In her last years Hannah was a regular visitor to the Reorganized Norwegian Synod conventions, and was present at the conventions held at the college in 1928 and 1930. She had named Preus executor of her estate, and he, no doubt, had something to do with directing Ottesen's library to the synod's newly-acquired college. In the October, 1931 *Bethany Bulletin*, President Ylvisaker reported that on October 14, a van arrived from Decorah, Iowa with the household effects of Pastor J. A. Ottesen and his daughter Hannah:

The books will form a substantial addition to our theological library, which already numbers several thousand volumes. A room has been set aside for this library on the first [ground] floor of the administration building—a safe place for our pastors to browse and meditate when they come to visit, to attend conferences, committee meetings and the like.

A third acquisition came from the estate of Pastor Markus Fr. Wiese [*Vee' se*]. Born in 1842 in Denmark, he came to America in 1868. He became a close friend of Pastor Ottesen, and also the H. A. Preus who had served as president of the synod for several years. Through his acquaintance with Preus and Ottesen, Wiese studied theology at Concordia Seminary St. Louis and was ordained in 1869, after which he served several Norwegian and Danish congregations. In 1892, he was called to Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church as successor to Ottesen. He was pastor there at the time of the merger and no doubt influenced them in joining the reorganized Norwegian Synod. Pastor John A. Moldstad, writing in the *Lutheran Sentinel* (January 3, 1934, p. 9) described Wiese as “a gifted poet, a diligent student, especially of the old theologians, a learned man, a prolific writer and a hymnologist of note.” That last quality explains the fact that a large part of the Wiese library was an extensive collection of hymnbooks in various languages. He had been a member of the committee which produced the *Synodens Salmebog* [The Synod's Hymnbook] in 1902,03, and authored several articles and works on hymnology. The Wiese library also included a 1580 copy of *The Book of Concord*, which a few years ago was restored.

*The Bethany Scroll*, February 1934 reported

Because Bethany has been so fortunate as to receive the library of the Rev. Wiese, the Bethany Women's Society is now concerned with providing proper quarters for it. This newly acquired library will be combined with the Hvale Library which we already possess. To house these books, the room corresponding to the Bethany Library and now known as “the Shop” [i.e. the long room on the west side of the south wing] has been chosen, and plans for plastering and redecorating the room are underway.

By 1935, the library was being called “The Synod Memorial Library.” After the seminary was established, the Memorial library became the core of the seminary library, and was often

referred to as “the Sem library.” When the 1967 library was built, part of the memorial library was moved to the new library’s lower level (a room in the northwest corner), and the rest to the seminary room on the east side of the north wing, which later also took over the space formerly occupied by the college library.

When the 1978 seminary building was built on Division St., the old Memorial library was housed there and in various other places until the Browns court building was completed. Today, most of the collection is at the Synod/Seminary building, although the rare books are housed in a climate-controlled vault in the 1998 library near Old Main.

Before we leave the subject of the Synod Memorial Library, we must comment on the one who brought order to it. A seminary brochure describing the Rare Book Collection reports:

Professor Christopher U. Faye, a distinguished rare book cataloger from the University of Illinois began the cataloging of the collection in the early 1950s. The Library of Congress in Washington D. C. accepted much of Professor Faye’s work as the original cataloging of these books.

When this writer came to Bethany as a student in the 1950s, Prof. Faye was hard at work in the Memorial library. A colorful individual with a very unique personality, he occasionally preached for chapel what were very edifying homilies, but almost always provided a unique, memorable incident. While at work in the library, he was outfitted in a white lab coat. But perhaps most memorable of all, more than once, he played a part in the annual Christmas banquet, by reciting the Christmas story from Luke 2 in the Zulu language which he had learned as a child growing up in the South African mission field.

The name Memorial Library was retained by the college for the 1967 and the 1998 libraries. As President B. W. Teigen described it, it was not simply a memorial to Pastors Hvale, Ottesen Wiese and others, but also to the laymen and women who had faithfully

supported the synod's efforts to purchase the college in 1926 and 1927. Until 1967, both libraries occupied their spaces on the west side of the ground floor of old Main.

### *Developing a College Library*

During the first years the synod owned the college, the faculty elected a library committee of three, and it appears that for the most part the library was monitored by students. In 1931, student Roberta Haller was "elected" librarian. Later a discussion arose in the faculty as to whether or not her age prevented her from enforcing discipline, an older staff member was put in charge in the. When the faculty revisited its decision, the position was restored to her, and all went well. Later after graduating from Valparaiso University, she joined the faculty as an instructor.

Little tidbits revealing the development of the library can be gleaned from the college president's reports to the synod and from faculty minutes. In 1931, Ylvisaker reports "substantial additions and improvements" to the library.

Already when Holden Olson was president, Bethany began to seek accreditation for the high school from the University of Minnesota. Soon after Ylvisaker became president, there were regular visitors from the University of Minnesota committee responsible for accreditation, and also made transfer arrangements with the private colleges in the state. The accreditation entailed regular visits by an inspector from the university committee, whose duties included seeing to it that the schools' libraries met certain standards.

Undoubtedly, there was regular pressure from them to improve the library holdings. In 1935, Ylvisaker reported "Over a period of four years, the library will need to purchase books at the rate of \$200 annually (that's \$3,073 in 2017 dollars). In November 1937, reporting on a

visit from the University inspector, “The library is in need of more books in the social sciences, biography, and fiction sections.” In 1938, Dean Shumway of the university, who was of great help to the college in accreditation matters, counseled that the library still needed improvement, and in 1939, Ylvisaker reported to the faculty that “the chairman of the University accrediting committee, Mr. Shumway had allowed us to postpone the appointment of a librarian,” so for the time being, the library committee continued to serve as de facto librarian, which apparently continued until the arrival of Ella Anderson. During this time, it appears that cataloging the library was carried out by short-term hiring of individuals with library science training.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Library holdings grew steadily. Much of that growth was certainly through a deliberate program of acquiring specific books to meet the needs of the high school and college departments. But there were many donations from individuals, and the materials donated were not merely cast-offs.

*The Scroll* faithfully reported library acquisitions, perhaps emphasizing the high quality donations — the *Scroll* advisor was usually one of the English teachers, who was also likely to be on the library committee.

The cataloging of the library began soon after the school became a coed institution emphasizing both the high school and junior college. In October 1929, *The Scroll* reported that Esther Hannibal of Chicago, a 1929 graduate, was re-cataloging the library. In May, 1930, *The Scroll* reported that cataloging of the library was now complete and that new steel shelves and new tables had been added. Notable additions were an *Americana Encyclopedia* and *Webster’s Dictionary*. There were other new books in history, language, and science.

In February, 1932, *The Scroll* reported a donation of some valuable books by Mr. B. P. Holst, who had been active in the *National Lutheran Education Association*, which had helped to rescue the school financially on several occasions. His gift was two sets of Encyclopedias, *Meyer's Lexicon* and the *Progressive Reference Library* in eleven volumes. An April, 1934 news item reported that the library had been given a twenty volume set of translations of German classics. In 1937, *The Scroll* reported the donation of forty-one books by the Synod's congregation in Boston in the areas of drama, psychology, philosophy, poetry, translation of classics, and modern fiction.

An especially significant acquisition was reported in 1939: Four hundred books along with dormitory furniture and other equipment had been purchased from Gale College which had closed in 1939. Gale College, at one time called Gale University, had been founded in Galesville, Wisconsin, in 1852, and its buildings dated to 1862. It was run by the Methodist – Episcopal Church, then by the Presbyterians and finally, on the brink of failure in 1898, was purchased by the Old Norwegian Synod. After the 1917 merger, it was associated with the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, later ELC. The college did undergo some expansion and construction under the Lutherans, but by 1939 closed because of insufficient enrollment. It is not difficult to imagine that had the ELS not acquired Bethany in 1927, Gale College might have been the next try. (An article on Gale College appears in the 1903 *Festskrift—Den Norske synodens Jubilaem 1853–1903*, The fiftieth anniversary book of the Norwegian Synod).

Through the 1930s, the college catalog, where the formal qualifications of faculty members were listed, did not list any one in the position of librarian. In Ylvisaker's 1942 report to the synod, the listing of the faculty included M. Koschmann (later Mrs. G. F.

Guldberg) (history, English, library). The next year, Ada Stokes was listed with her subjects: (Latin, English, Library, United States History). Neither of these seems to have had training in Library Science. In 1945, Miss Ella B. Anderson joined the faculty to teach English, but was listed as doing addition work at Mankato State Teachers college. The 1949 catalog identifies her additional work as being in Library Science, and later, the catalog lists her as college librarian. Ella Anderson was librarian during the years the college prepared for North Central accreditation, a time when the adequacy of the library was especially critical. That project also involved the planning of the 1967 library. Her tenure as librarian continued until 1971. Today, Anderson hall is named to memorialize Ella and her sister Sophia who had even longer tenure at the college.

Given the small size of the Library reading room, the intimacy of the small student body, and the broad spread in maturity from high school freshmen to college sophomores as well as pre-seminary students, keeping an orderly library was a challenge. From time to time, concerns about a noisy library were voiced occasionally in faculty meetings. In November, 1940, *The Scroll* carried an article entitled “Noiseless revolution occurs in Library.” The article observed “Under the watchful eyes of the Librarian, Miss Koschmann,” the library was no longer the place of social gatherings after meals; “Now silence is maintained.”

It is hard to say how long that lasted, But in September 1945, *The Scroll* introduced Ella Anderson as the new librarian under the title “Shh. . . Library Zone.”

How can it be so quiet in the library? And what, no supervisor? That's right. The students have been put on what is termed an honor system, the success of which is unmistakable. Nobody even wants to talk now.

Miss Ella Anderson, the head of the library system, is well pleased with the results of it and has posted rules for the withdrawal of books and magazines so that each student is able to check out his own books.

By 1956, when this writer began as a high school junior, Ella was occasionally seen moving among the library tables with a “Shh...Shh.”

The 1950 edition of the college catalog described the library:

The college library consists of a large, pleasant reading room and a combination stack and work room. The open shelves of the reading room permit maximum freedom in examining and drawing books. The book collection contains approximately 6,000 volumes, classified according to the Dewey Decimal system. Approximately fifty magazines, general and professional, are regularly received.

Students doing extensive work for term papers use the additional facilities afforded by the Mankato Public Library.

The library is administered by a member of the faculty who is a professionally trained librarian and under her direction, routine work is done by student assistants. Formal instruction in the use of the library is given in connection with the English courses.

The theological library consists of approximately 10,000 volumes and is housed in a large stack room in the administration building. Administration is in the hands of one of the faculty members appointed by the Synod. (*Bethany College Catalog 1950*, p. 11)

The 1967 library served the college well until an expansion was necessary as the college considered adding the Bachelor of Arts degree to the Associate degree. However, the idea of expanding the 1967 library was quickly scuttled because of the extensive use of asbestos in its construction as well as other issues, so a new building was again required.

Today, the 1998 library serves a wide variety of functions. Aside from being the dispenser of books and a home of research, the library is a roomy, pleasant, and quiet place for study. It also houses the college archives, the Rare book collection, which its 1580 copy of the Book of Concord, the Robert Preus collection, the education department, and most logically, the student success center.

While the library was in its 1968 building, library resources were becoming computerized. First the card catalog was converted to microfiche, But the college soon joined OCLC, the Online Computer Library Center, a global library catalog, and digitized the catalog of its holdings and converted its cataloging to the Library of Congress system. Today’s students can search a wide variety of electronic, scholarly resources and can request books from far-away

libraries. Recently the library has begun to digitize some of the college archive holdings so that one can browse the *Bethany Scroll* from its earliest years, the *Fidelis* year book, and find a variety of photos picturing college life in by-gone years.

Ella Anderson has been the librarian with the longest tenure. Subsequent librarians have been Sally Dale, Marion Carrison, Mary Birmingham, Richard Lammert, Jerral Parrish, Norma Brown, Orrin Ausen, and presently Alyssa Inniger, all professionally trained librarians.

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### **Bethany Lutheran College Librarians**

Ella Andereson	1945-1970
Sally Dale	1970-72
Marion Carrison	1972-73
Mary Birmingham	1973-1982
Richard Lammert	1983-87
Jerral Parrish	1987-95
Norma Brown	1996-2002
Orrin Ausen	2002-2013
Alyssa Inniger	2013-