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Foundations for Ministry: A Partnership Between Students, Faculty, and Librarians in Theological Research

Introduction

Faculty and librarians wedded together in mutual bibliographic-instructional bliss is regarded as "mythical" by some librarians, and this is supported in the literature.[1] This paper, however, concentrates on sharing an exciting experience in visionary planning for the critical treatment of information to meet user needs.

In September of 1985, "Foundations for Ministry" ("Foundations") was introduced to the Interdenominational Theological Center (I.T.C.), an ecumenical graduate school of theology,[2] one of the two graduate and four undergraduate institutions that comprise the Atlanta University Center, Inc. (AUC).[3] "Foundations" is a basic interdisciplinary course designed to introduce the student to Christian ministry with emphasis on ministry within the Black witnessing community.

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[1] For an analysis of this issue, see Constance McCarthy, "The Faculty Problem," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 11 (July 1985): 142-45; Steven K. Stoan, "Research and Library Skills: An Analysis and Interpretation," *College and Research Libraries* 45 (March 1984): 99-109; Mary K. Sellen and Jan Jirouch, "Perceptions of Library Use by Faculty and Students: A Comparison," *College and Research Libraries* 45 (July 1984): 259-267; Anne K. Beaubien, Sharon A. Hogan, and Mary W. George, *Learning the Library: Concepts and Methods for Effective Bibliographic Instruction* (New York: Bowker, 1982), pp. 238-239.

[2] The I.T.C. is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It is related actively to the larger academic community of theological education through its participation in the Atlanta Theological Association and the Georgia Association of Pastoral Care.

[3] The other graduate school is Atlanta University, and the four undergraduate schools are Clark College, Morehouse College, Morris Brown College, and Spelman College.

An I.T.C. Curriculum Task Force was appointed in 1982 and has worked with intense deliberations to bring the new curriculum into being. From the outset, this librarian lifted for the Task Force the need for an effective bibliographic-instructional program that would include theological research and methodology. Consequently, the final design for "Foundations" includes a comprehensive library module, demonstrating the centrality of the AUC's Robert W. Woodruff Library to the I.T.C. academic community.

"Foundations for Ministry" Contextualized

The Task Force, with the aid of a consultant, formulated the theoretical underpinnings for a theological curriculum after carefully reviewing the I.T.C.'s statement of purpose and objectives. General theories of learning and curriculum planning with emphasis on particular theories of theological curriculum were examined. Components of a theological curriculum should:

1. recognize and respect the uniqueness of the human personality and unique individual encounters with the Holy Spirit;
2. regard the nature of persons as essentially constituted by the hunger for wholeness;
3. emphasize specialized modes of investigation (disciplines) in relation to each other (multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary), thus contributing to the holistic education of persons; and
4. perceive the learner as an adult, thus stressing the concept of andragogy rather than the traditional understanding of pedagogy.[4]

The Curriculum Task Force recognized and affirmed individual differences, levels of attainment, varying stages of maturation, and the different denominational requirements of students attending the I.T.C., culminating in the formulation of 101 basic competencies for ministry.[5] The curriculum and instruction are related to the actual function of ministry. These competencies served as a guide for curriculum development, and will also be valuable as a basis for evaluating students' progress through their seminary journey.

Thus, the curriculum design emerged with the Curriculum Task Force perceiving "the philosophical nature of curriculum to be the process that moves students and professors of a seminary community to an enlightened understanding about themselves, God, and the lived world."[6] This process, hopefully, will foster interaction between students, professors, and ideas that will stimulate critical and analytical thinking, and en-

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[4] Interdenominational Theological Center, *Report of the Curriculum Revision Task Force, 1983-1985*, rev. ed. (Atlanta: ITC Press, 1985), p. 1.

[5] Ibid., pp. 93-102.

[6] Ibid., p. 8.

courage research and writing by both professors and students.[7]

"Foundations," an example of the culmination of theoretical underpinnings and basic competencies, emphasizes the various components of ministry: human, societal, and spiritual. It is structured to include eight modules of instruction. The modules are:

1. The Call to Ministry
2. The Theological Curriculum: An Introduction
3. The Theological Curriculum
4. Theological Research and Methodology
5. Critical and Analytical Thinking
6. The Individual and His or Her Religion
7. Christian Thought: Issues of Doctrine and Faith
8. Religious Pluralism and the Protestant Church in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries.[8]

The objectives of the course, "Foundations," provide an opportunity for each student to participate in a personal assessment of Christian ministry; explore the heritage of ministry; and share in an evaluation of Christian ministry.[9] "Foundations" is one of the core requirements for I.T.C.'s Master of Divinity Degree. This degree is an integration of "theological studies and the work of ministry so that theory and practice, academy and parish become complementary components of the educational process."[10]

"Foundations for Ministry" Actualized

New students at the I.T.C. experienced bibliographic instruction prior to "Foundations" being introduced. There is a general two-hour orientation to the Library, including a walking tour, given by the Head of the Bibliographic Instruction Department. In addition, this librarian introduces theological research to the new students in a five-hour session. Also, course-integrated instruction is presently operative as faculty members schedule specific bibliographic instruction directly related to their theological disciplines.

An additional dimension to the Library's instructional program was realized with the introduction of "Foundations." Constance A. Mellon speaks of a "warmth seminar" in relationship to reducing library anxiety;[11] this term aptly describes our program. Library anxiety is consider-

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[7] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[8] *Interdenominational Theological Center Catalog: 1986-87* (Atlanta: ITC Press 1986), p. 71.

[9] I.T.C., *Report of the Curriculum Task Force*, p. 32.

[10] Ibid., p. 10.

[11] Constance A. Mellon, "Library Anxiety: A Grounded Theory and Its Development," *College and Research Libraries* 47 (March 1986): 164.

ably reduced by the interaction with the library teaching faculty. We particularly stress that the Library exists to meet informational needs, that librarians are anxious to assist in this process, and that the Library is "user friendly."

Module IV, "Theological Research and Methodology," of "Foundations" afforded the teaching faculty of the AUC's Robert W. Woodruff Library a creative opportunity to participate in the development of its components. They are:

1. **The Library of Congress Classification System** with special emphasis on LC subject headings and the public catalog (particularly the Bible section).
2. **The Literature of Reference and Serial Resources** with emphasis on resources needed by graduate students of theology: commentaries, concordances, Greek and Hebrew lexicons, versions of the Bible, and particularly Gerhard Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and G. Johannes Botterweck's and Helmer Ringgren's *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* Theological journals are given special emphasis.
3. **Bibliographic Format** with emphasis on understanding and using correct bibliographic form according to Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (4th ed.) in theological research.
4. **Theological Indexes and Abstracts** with special emphasis on *Religion Index One* (journals), *Religion Index Two* (monographs), *New Testament Abstracts, Old Testament Abstracts, Religious and Theological Abstracts, Index to Book Reviews in Religion,* etc.

Module IV is structured so that the four prior-assigned groups are in a particular component each Wednesday afternoon for eighty minutes[12] and rotate to a different component the following week. These rotations continue during the four weeks of Module IV. This way, each group experiences all of the components. The library faculty taught the same component four times. This "simultaneous round-robin" methodology enables learning to occur in the three domains as understood by Bloom: Cognitive, Affective, and Psycho-motor.[13] The teacher-learner connection is intentionally planned for experiential learning.

The I.T.C. faculty for "Foundations" is quite supportive of the Library's module by participating in the learning experiences along with the students, ensuring continuity in group reflective sessions and a holistic team-task. Their response and the response of the students have been completely positive. Here we see librarians, faculty, and students in mutual partnership, evaluating and managing information to meet user needs.[14] That which is experienced in the Library's module for "Founda-

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[12] The seminary's schedule gives priority to "Foundations" which is offered to beginning theological students on Wednesdays, 9 a.m.—5 p.m. during the first semester of each academic year.

[13] Benjamin S. Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1977), p. 7.

[14] For a discussion of the partnership concept, see Donald J. Kenney and Linda J. Wil-

tions" has implications for qualitative library research, bringing users and relevant information together and providing an innovative approach toward user services.

"Foundations for Ministry" Analyzed

At the beginning of the Library's module for "Foundations," sixty-two students were pretested using a Theological Research Questionnaire designed by this librarian. This involved rating five questions on a scale from one (lowest) to five (highest). At the end of the module, the same number of students were posttested using the same questionnaire. That which follows is a graphic interpretation of the pretest and posttest data, indicating growth rates.

Question 1:   How acquainted are you with theological indexes and abstracts to enable you to use theological resources, particularly religious journals?
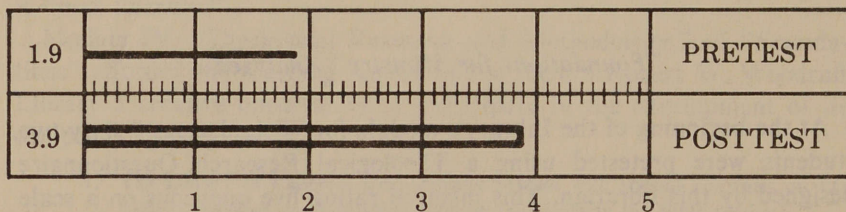
GRAPH 1

2.3	━━━━━━━━				PRETEST
4.2	━━━━━━━━━━━				POSTTEST
	1	2	3	4	5
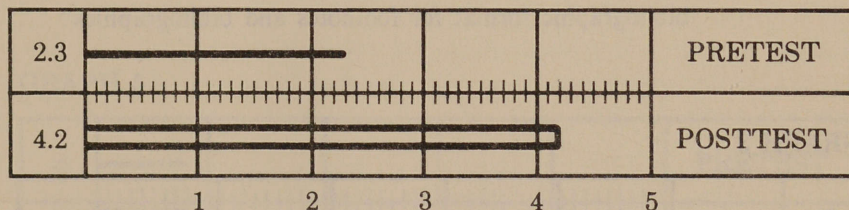
Graph 1 shows a 2.3 comprehension level in the pretest with the medium comprehension level increasing to 4.2 in the posttest. The growth rate was 1.9 percent.

Question 2:   How well can you effectively use the Library of Congress Classification System to understand, locate, and use theological resources?

son, "Developing a Partnership in Library Instruction," *College and Research Libraries* 47 (May 1986): 321-322.

GRAPH 2

1.9						PRETEST
3.9						POSTTEST

1   2   3   4   5

Graph 2 shows a 1.9 comprehension level in the pretest with the medium comprehension level increasing to 3.9 in the posttest. The growth rate was 2.0 percent.

Question 3:   To what degree are you able to utilize the 4th edition (1973) of Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* to determine the correct bibliographic format for footnotes and bibliographies?
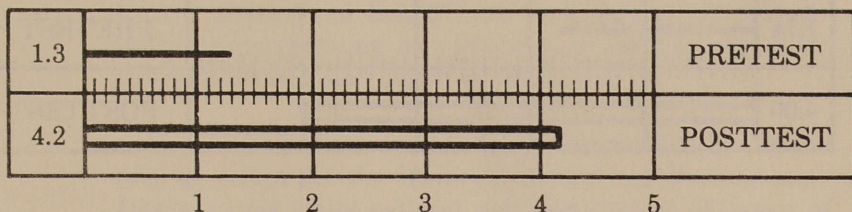
GRAPH 3

2.4						PRETEST
4.0						POSTTEST

1   2   3   4   5
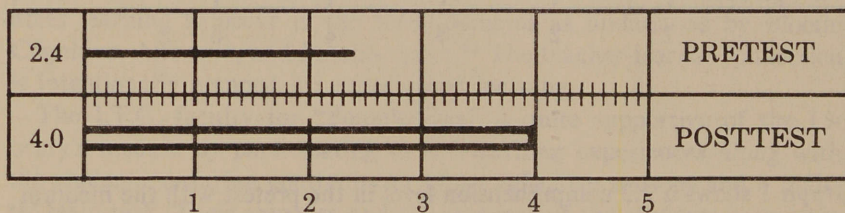
Graph 3 shows a 2.4 comprehension level in the pretest with the medium comprehension level increasing to 4.0 in the posttest. The growth rate was 1.6 percent.

Question 4:   How acquainted are you with theological reference literature?
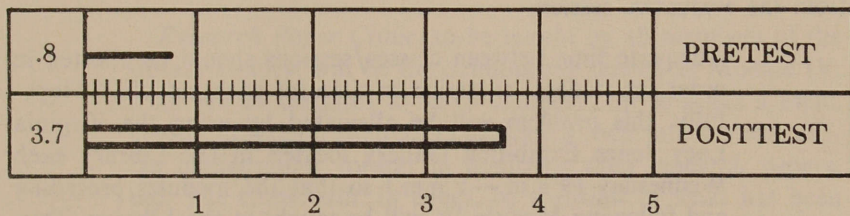
GRAPH 4

| 1.3 | | | | | | PRETEST |
| 4.2 | | | | | | POSTTEST |

1   2   3   4   5

Graph 4 shows a 1.3 comprehension level in the pretest with the medium comprehension level increasing to 4.2 in the posttest. The growth rate was 2.9 percent.

Question 5:   How acquainted are you with theological serial literature?

GRAPH 5

| .8 | | | | | | PRETEST |
| 3.7 | | | | | | POSTTEST |

1   2   3   4   5

Graph 5 shows a .8 comprehension level in the pretest with the medium comprehension level increasing to 3.7 in the posttest. The growth rate was 2.9 percent.

In conclusion, Graph 6 shows the medium percentage comprehension level in both pre- and posttesting on a scale from one (lowest) to five (highest).

GRAPH 6

1.74							PRETEST
4.00							POSTTEST
	1	2	3	4	5		
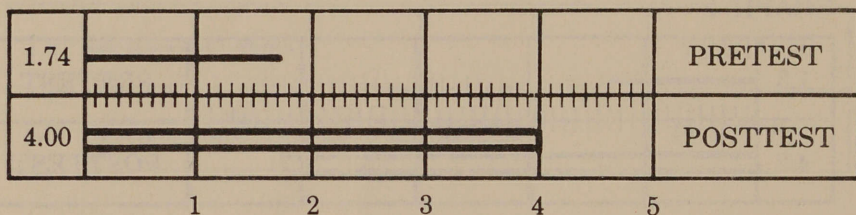
The average comprehension level of the pretest was 1.74 percent with the average posttest comprehension level increasing to 4.00 percent. The growth rate on a scale of 1 to 5 was 2.26 percentile, or converting these figures into a computation of 100 percentile, 45.2 percent growth rate was derived from the Theological Research and Methodology Module.

Conclusion

The library faculty who taught "Theological Research and Methodology" evaluated the experience, noting that the I.T.C. teaching team and students highly commended Module IV of "Foundations." It was the only module to receive totally positive feedback. Several issues emerged from the evaluative session.

1. Adequate time between classes/sessions should be allotted in order for students to arrive on time for each module.[15] Hopefully, this problem will be alleviated by using the Virginia Lacy Jones Exhibition Gallery located in the Library each Wednesday (9 a.m.—5 p.m.) so that the modules preceding and following Module IV will be taught in the Library. This, then, will eliminate the time it took the I.T.C. students to travel to and from their campus for "Foundations."

2. Three additional components need to be added to the Library's module (increasing this module from four to seven weeks):

    On-line Reference, particularly to access the large database

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[15] The Robert W. Woodruff Library is the centralized library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., and is located two blocks from the seminary campus.

of the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) via DIALOG Information Retrieval Service. This religion index covers 275,000 records as of May 1986.[16] This Library understands its teaching function as identified in the research of Guskin, Stoffle, and Boissé[17] and feels that it "is uniquely suited to incorporating new information formats into its instruction, service, and collection objectives."[18]

Special Collections and Archives were not included in the original design for the Library's module for "Foundations." However, this major national and international collection of primary and secondary sources on the Black experience represents the "crown jewels" of the Library's holdings[19] and must be included in an in-depth instructional program. Special Collections provides books and non-current bound periodicals on the life and culture of the African and Afro-American peoples for students, faculty, or researchers who desire more specialized materials on the Black experience. Archives has unpublished and primary source materials from most of the AUC institutions, local and Southern regional organizations devoted to race relations and socio-economic conditions in the South, and individual papers and manuscripts of outstanding Black citizens. The resources in Special Collections and Archives comprise one of the largest collections of rare and primary source materials on the Black experience in the Southeast.

Research Paper Clinic, to be taught by all members of the library faculty, will be the culminating session of Module IV. This will be designed to teach students how to select a topic, consult different resources in compiling their information, utilize bibliographic format in finalizing their research papers, etc. The Clinic will, in effect, be a review of what has been taught in the previous six sessions and will demonstrate to the students how all of this information gels into the final product—a well-constructed research paper using the many re-

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[16] Paul D. Peterson, editor for *Religion Index One* and Systems Manager, interview with author, American Theological Library Association's 40th Annual Conference, Kansas City, Missouri, 17 June 1986.

[17] Alan E. Guskin, Carla J. Stoffle, and Joseph A. Boissé, "The Academic Library as a Teaching Library: A Role for the 1980s," *Library Trends* 28 (Fall 1979): 281-295.

[18] Hannelore B. Rader, "The Teaching Library Enters the Electronic Age," *College and Research Libraries* 47 (June 1986): 403.

[19] *Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library Brochure* [Atlanta: RWWL, 1982, p. 4].

sources and services that are available to them in the Woodruff Library.

Also, we plan to incorporate the research course requirements for "Foundations" directly into the Research Paper Clinic so that the research topic is not chosen in isolation but demonstrates quite well course-integrated instruction on the part of librarians and faculty.

A suggested extension of this idea is to offer individual assistance to the I.T.C. students near the time of midterm and final examinations when most research papers are due. The library faculty is in total agreement that the need for this kind of assistance is very real, and if the parameters can be worked out, this will be another service offered by the library faculty.

3. The lead teacher of both the I.T.C. faculty and library teaching faculty has requested that all general objectives for each of the eight modules be written behaviorally for the 1986-87 academic year. This librarian will be working with the library faculty for each of the seven components of Module IV to accomplish this task.

The AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library teaching faculty and the I.T.C. faculty are approaching what Willie L. Parson describes as a "new paradigm for librarianship": visionary planning and practice resulting in a proactive orientation.[20] He says that the library from the user perspective is a service agency that positions itself at the center of the academic environment.[21] Michael Gorman, in discussing "fortress libraries," picks up on this concept when he notes that "users view library use as merely a matter of the most convenient access and simply care about the success of a library in satisfying their demands."[22] If the Library is central to the academic community, then it must provide the quality of user services that is conceived with the critical treatment of information. "Foundations for Ministry," a partnership between students, faculty, and librarians in theological research, is making the issue of critical thinking a priority as the combined skills of librarians, faculty, and students interface.

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[20] Willie L. Parson, "User Perspective on a New Paradigm for Librarianship," *College and Research Libraries* 45 (September 1984): 370-373.

[21] Ibid., p. 370.

[22] Michael Gorman, "Laying Siege to the 'Fortress Library'" *American Libraries* 17 (May 1986): 325.

Acknowledgements