
This paper answers the modern movement of library design toward group spaces and computer workstations, sometimes to the cost of quiet spaces needed for contemplation. The study and observation of places created to inspire contemplation will yield a sampling of common characteristics that will be gathered into a rubric, and which can then be applied to today’s theological libraries, helping them remain hospitable to the process of reflection. Not an argument against modern trends, this is a call for the defense of the quiet, the solitude, and the beauty that were once defining hallmarks of every library.

Headings:

Theological libraries; Reflection; Hospitality; Library design.
THE CONTEMPLATIVE SPACE: HOW THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIES CAN BE HOSPITABLE TO THEIR PATRONS’ PROCESS OF REFLECTION

by
Christine J. Cherney

A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
December 2014

Approved by
_______________________________________
Brian Sturm
Table of Contents

I. Introduction 2
II. Literature Review 4
III. Research Question 12
IV. Methods 13
V. Results and Discussion 23
VI. Conclusion: The Rubric 25
VII. Future Research 28
Works Cited 31
Appendix 1 33
Appendix 2 34
I. Introduction.

Library. It is a word that evokes visions of endless rows of shelves weighted with books and the scent of old paper; it conjures the memory of a soft, almost sacred hush that pervades a vast space and that is democratically guarded by all its devotees. Libraries create sensory impressions that stay with us even as the information they purvey becomes increasingly digital. Even in the minds of a growing technologically-savvy population, there lurks the classic image of an ideal library; a comfortable place to come and to stay as one gathers and reflects over information, new and old.

But the digital age is bringing change to the centuries’ old model, whose last major upheaval involved the transition from scrolls to books. The two main commodities of a library, information and space in which to process it, remain the same, but the methods used to provide these commodities and the forms in which they are delivered are in flux across the library world.

Along with teaching the traditional service model, today’s Library Science degree programs seek to equip future librarians with the ability to process and to funnel as much information as possible to their library patrons, many of whom prefer to use electronic resources exclusively and, in increasing numbers, remotely. Librarians often find themselves adjusting to the quickly shifting needs of their patrons and data providers and, in so doing, feel the cut of the double-edged sword of adaptability. Those who push (or are pushed) to make
quick, reactive changes may later find that they have tossed out a baby or two with the old bathwater.

Perhaps in response to the ever-present expectation of upgrades in library technology and service, hospitality is a current topic of great interest among the theological library community, as evidenced by the conversations, papers, and presentations of the members of the American Theological Library Association in recent years. This paper explores the ties between hospitable library space and the task of theological libraries in providing or protecting the qualities that help their patrons practice reflection, even while they offer the latest in relevant technological research resources and tools.

This study will include an examination of architecture and the layout of academic theological libraries to determine their level of conduciveness to the process of reflection, through two parts. First, the architecture of structures designed to facilitate a meditative mindset in their patrons, customers, or inhabitants (i.e. monasteries, gardens, places of worship, etc.) will be observed to identify and collect the common characteristics determined to encourage the process of reflection.

Next, these characteristics will be used to inform a rubric that can be used by theological librarians (or other librarians) to assess how hospitable their library’s facilities are to their patrons’ process of reflection. A short space will be given to discuss other research topics which could spring from this work and potential further uses for the rubric.
II. Literature Review.

Structure and Purpose

“Two ideas are important to all buildings: structure and purpose. Nearly all architectural enrichments can be understood in relation to how a [building] stands up and what its builders wanted it to say.” (McNamara, 7) While libraries can have many purposes, most if not all of them can be understood under four main headings. First, libraries preserve information (whether digital, print, or in some other form) in an organized system. Next, libraries make that information available to their patrons, within certain boundaries. Third, an appropriate space is provided for the perusal of that information. This space is ideally designed to be optimal for both the patrons and the format of the information they are assessing. Last, libraries provide information experts to do the work of the other three functions. Librarians organize, preserve, and store information; they make it accessible for their patrons; and they shape and maintain the library space for optimal functioning.

These key functions are often articulated in a library’s purpose statement, a construct that takes its content from the values both of the library and of its parent institution or funding patrons. In his book, *The Space Between*, Eric O. Jacobsen invites his reader to glance around the designed space in which he or she is sitting, and to ask the question, “Who thought this space through, and what can you discern about their values as you interact with it?” (Jacobsen, 11) The purpose and the values of a library, of the institution of which it is a part,
and of the people who work there cannot be hidden from those who come to the
library, to make use of its resources. Therefore, it is extremely important for
those who are in a decision-making role to carefully consider both the needs of
the library’s patrons and the message they wish to convey before planning a
library, making major changes, or maintaining its day-to-day routine.

The Library as a Place of Reflection

The concept of the library as a place of reflection is not so much an idea
“whose time has come,” as an idea whose time has come again. Even a cursory
examination of older literature on librarianship cannot fail to see the basic
assumption that the library was expected to be a place of communal solitude
where one might come to learn, to examine, and to ponder subjects of interest. It
was seen as the vehicle for elevating society through the provision of a place for
each citizen to follow the path of intellectual curiosity. (Legler) Libraries also
have long been viewed as fortresses of knowledge, guarding the resources of
civilization through “dark” times in history, such as the Middle Ages. In
Cassiodorus’ retirement during the collapse of the Roman Empire, he gathered
his resources and deliberately included a library in his monastery.

“[Cassiodorus] understood, too, that a library must be a place of peace and of
visual delight, and he thought that the physical appearance of the place should
reflect the role of the library as a source of refreshment and liberty within a
confined space.” (Southern, 167)
But, this long assumed ideal is being challenged in the literature and practices of modern librarianship, and even in the ideas of “progress” expressed in the popular media. It is not uncommon for librarians to field questions about “when everything is going to be online,” and many users believe that all necessary research materials can be found with a quick search on the internet.

Librarians must make the case for the importance of a well-designed library space, not only for excellent digital resources and patrons’ computer needs, but also to welcome in budding researchers and serious scholars searching for a place apart, in which to perform the slow, serious, quiet work of their discipline.

Blogger and New York Public Librarian, Lea Carpenter, speaks of the work that is done in libraries this way:

> While it would be too bold to propose libraries might take the place of churches, there is this parallel: we visit libraries to find quiet space, and room for reflections. We visit them to learn, and perhaps to create based on what we know and where we think we can contribute to what is not known...they provide peace, privacy, safety and opportunity. They are non-partisan pools for reflection, introspection, and observation. (Carpenter)

Great libraries of the past provide a clear and compelling view of the effects of the structure and decoration of a library on its users. From Cicero’s correspondence, we learn that he believed a library’s interior decoration should be dignified and in keeping with its purpose. Therefore, in his own reading rooms and libraries, he avoided representations of gods and heroes such as Bacchus, Ares, and Cronus, and favored those of Hermes, the Muses, Hercules, and Demeter. (Staikos, 119) The inherent dignity of a library’s purpose held
weight with him, and it is an interesting counterpoint to modern trends which seek to make libraries more casual and approachable.

The imagination is captured by a detailed description of another private library belonging to one of the movers and shakers of history. The quote here is lengthy, but is included because of the evocative way it describes the reading practice and library curation of someone whose means and influence equaled the greatness of his passion for books:

Pliny the Younger...was no ordinary book-lover and man of letters but perhaps the most passionate bibliophile in all the history of ancient Rome. The library in his villa at Laurentum was an apsidal room adjacent to his gymnasium. Here he kept his ‘philosophical’ books, by which he meant those that were not for light reading but for serious study. For his everyday reading (diaeta), which he called his ‘silent and true passion’, he had another apartment which he had fitted out and decorated himself. This was a sort of pavilion in a quiet position at the end of a vaulted passage (cryptoporticus) on the garden side of the villa. It consisted of three main rooms and two smaller ones. In the middle was the ‘sitting-room’ (cubiculum) with folding doors to the vaulted passage and a window looking out over the sea. Opening off that, on the far side...was an attractive veranda (zotheca) which could be closed off from the cubiculum by glass partitions and curtains and was furnished with a couch and two armchairs: here Pliny could sit in seclusion, with the sea at his feet and behind him the little villages against the backdrop of the forest. (Staikos, 119-120)

The appeal of the beauty and solitude of this suite of rooms, thoughtfully created and maintained for a single purpose, cannot be denied by any scholar or book lover. Although this description comes down to us across the ages, providing
only a brief glimpse, it serves as a spiritual model for what a reflective space can be.

Christianity and Material Objects

Because the theological librarian has the special role of curating collections which point to divine or metaphysical realities, and of assisting those who seek them, it is a most important topic for consideration: how physical realities can help or hinder this quest. In his book on the thought and practices of early Christians, Robert Louis Wilken references the words of one of the most foundational and philosophical of the early Christian thinkers, Gregory of Nyssa. “It is foolish and idle, says Gregory, to think that Christian faith consists only in teachings.” He references the holy habits of making the sign of the cross when one speaks the “venerable names,” of the practice of immersing new believers in water (Baptism), and of the central ritual of Eucharist, receiving with thanksgiving the consecrated bread and wine as symbols of the Christ’s sacrifice. According to Gregory, if Christians were to slight these “sacramental tokens” in favor of the belief that Christianity consisted solely in “doctrinal precision,” the “Christian mystery” would become a mere pious fable.” (Wilken, 239)

Christianity is not alone in the expression of invisible realities through tangible, sense-oriented practices and traditions, though it does inform the bulk of the research presented here. The scope of the paper does not allow for explorations into other religious traditions, although they could be profitably
studied with an eye toward expanding an understanding of sacred space and places of reflection.

**Hospitality and Librarianship**

A current topic of great interest in the theological library community is the concern with how the discipline of hospitality can and should affect the practice of librarianship. Some have turned to studying the hospitality industry for pointers on making libraries more warm and welcoming to their patrons, such as Eric Johnson and Michelle Kazmer, who focus on accustoming librarians to the notion that their library can be an “institution of hospitality,” and offer helpful pointers on how to practically do so. (Johnson and Kazmer, 383-403)

However, Carisse Berryhill of Abilene Christian University has a different and uniquely insightful take on the question. “It seems to me that consumer invulnerability is the trap of the hospitality industry customer service mindset in our library settings.” She goes on to explain that in the biblical model, hospitality provides an occasion for instruction or revelation where the teacher is the guest and the learner is the host. Most of the insight, she says, comes from the guest and stranger, and in this way the host is the one receiving the blessing and benefit. She goes on to say, “Both educators and students sometimes mistakenly assume the telling is all one-way, and that the telling by the employees of the institution is only a service to be purchased, like a hotel room.” (Berryhill, *Guest*, 88) This mindset is one that could provide a sense of liberty
alongside the focus on service that is common to librarians. The vocation in view of a larger purpose, even of calling, would make it possible for hospitable theological librarianship to come from the heart.

Herman Peterson also supports his arguments for hospitable librarianship with biblical texts, although he places the librarians in the host role, emphasizing the extra effort and inconvenience that hospitality often costs. He includes a very pleasing analogy of offering delicious food to a guest as a way of viewing the librarian’s task of the “delicacies of providing information.” Peterson contends that practicing hospitality is a virtue that should be practiced by theological librarians. (Peterson, 21-22) Indeed, as they invite an ever-rotating set of patrons to come and study, theological librarians (either as guest or host) at the banquet are a vital component in this multi-layered, intensely valuable discipline of hospitality.

Hospitality and Reflection in Theological Education

Much of the recent work adjacent to the topic of hospitality in librarianship centers on the process of reading and its physical requirements. In an enlightening essay for the 2013 Conference of the American Theological Library Association, Anthony J. Elia discusses the roles of comfort with and control toward one’s surroundings as essential for the process of reading in his work on minimizing the “spatial violence” in our libraries, so that students can be more effective readers. He defines spatial violence as, “a combination of
things which include: a) affording only rigid, immutable space; b) enlarging, or shrinking space, which alters how learners can learn, or even focus productively; c) altering detrimentally the color, smell, and sound of a space…and; d) misunderstanding modes of entrance, signage, or access.” (Elia, 266)

Looking at our libraries and experiencing them from the patron’s point of view is essential to understanding the effects of their disparate elements upon the different tasks that are accomplished there. In theological libraries students read and research, performing their tasks much as they would in any other kind of library, but with one crucial difference. The texts with which they have to deal are sacred, and the libraries themselves revolve around and serve communities of faith. (Berryhill, Character, 227) The students and faculty who are a theological library’s primary patrons are seeking to interact with the texts they find there not only to satisfy their intellectual pursuits, but to carry on the conversation of faith that is the primary task of the theologian. They seek not only understanding, but formation and transformation through diligent and ardent pursuit of their sacred texts.

The task of the librarians who would serve these patrons and their purposes, then, must be to facilitate that conversation. “Valuing the voice of the student who converses and creates in our libraries, we find ourselves employed in a kind of midwifery to intellectual – and spiritual – labors…A hospitable librarian has the teacher’s ability to imagine how the situation looks to someone new and to bring clarity into the confusion.” (Berryhill, Character, 228) The gift
of being able to see things from a stranger’s point of view is key to the virtue of hospitality, and it is one that librarians of all kinds must possess and practice assiduously in the honest assessment of their libraries’ structures and services.

Summary

The purpose of this project is to improve academic theological libraries in the specific area of providing a welcoming atmosphere that is conducive to its patrons’ process of reflection. This will be accomplished through the use of a comparison of the current uses of library space as compared with spaces that are designed specifically for the purpose of reflection.

A rubric highlighting the characteristics that promote reflection will then be designed to aid librarians in the assessment and redesign of their libraries to maximize their hospitality toward the process of reflection. The rubric will be used to assess three to four sample libraries to explore the quality of current academic theological libraries.

III. Research Question.

Historical examples of grand structures and arguments for a more hospitable library environment can only go so far in modern Library Science which is, to state the obvious, a science. For a study to move from the merely academic to the practical, it must become concrete. Therefore, this study seeks an answer to the question: How can the study of “meditative” spaces help the
structure and layout of academic theological libraries become more conducive to the process of reflection?

IV. Methods.

Terminology and Overview

There are several terms of special significance that need to be understood within the context of this paper. Reflection, here, can be identified as the process over time of pondering some subject matter, idea, or purpose. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) explains it as: “The process or faculty by which the mind observes and examines its own experiences and emotions; intelligent self-awareness, introspection.” Reflection may include reading, writing, and/or quiet thought. It may be performed alone or in a communal space, and it may require stillness or motion. A reflective space is an area set aside for the express purpose of encouraging the process of reflection.

Hospitality can be understood as the generous and welcoming reception of visitors and guests; of anyone who does not naturally belong in a given situation. Again, the OED is helpful in understanding that hospitality is, “the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, with liberality and goodwill.” It involves preparation and the willingness and ability to minister to the particular needs of a group or an individual, and it can be a characteristic of either librarians or of a library space. Theological librarian David R. Stewart describes his experience of a hospitable library in this way; “For me, it meant the
environment (comfortable, orderly, quiet) and that questions of all sorts were welcome.” (Stewart, 286)

Lastly, this study is concerned with academic theological libraries, meaning those libraries concerned with serving either stand-alone theological seminaries, or divinity schools that are a part of a university or university system. For the purpose of this project, I will not be considering theological collections which make up portions of larger libraries, but only those library structures which are wholly purposed to serve the institution’s theological community.

Data Collection

To provide data for this analysis, I visited several theological libraries, to observation them for the qualities I had encountered in my review of relevant literature. Although none of the libraries I visited embodied the classical ideal, each had certain strengths and weaknesses which made them valuable for consideration. I also considered several books which pictorially explored reflective spaces, such as cathedrals, churches, and gardens, to look for their commonalities.

The JKM Library

First, I visited the JKM Library, whose name shows its previous identity (from 1975 to 2004) as the Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick Library. It is currently the
theological library for two seminaries: Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and McCormick Theological Seminary.

The buildings of the seminary are an unbroken “O” shape, enclosing a grassy courtyard; all of the rooms and hallways along the edges have large picture windows. Inside, the walls are paneled with rough, grey stone, which emphasize the clean, minimalist feel of the buildings and overall décor. Walking the halls, I was put in mind of a stark monk’s cell, pure in its simplicity. Even though artwork adorned some of the walls, the neutral color scheme and natural textures invited my mind to shed excess thoughts and focus on the task at hand.

The library continued this theme of grey and white, with rough stone walls, grey metal shelves, and pale flooring. Although it was neither large nor classically beautiful, it was in harmony with the look and atmosphere of the seminary, expressing simplicity and a purity of purpose that should serve its patrons very well. The colors, paired with large, second-floor windows along the two outer walls, succeeded in making the library feel open despite its modest dimensions.

Walking through entrance to the JKM Library I saw a common area, furnished with somewhat mismatched sofas, chairs, and tables. Although these furnishings seemed rather jumbled together with an eye toward function rather than form, they contrived to give a cozy feel to the space, and the students I observed there were comfortable, alternately working studiously and conversing quietly.
Reference and Circulation stacks took up the bulk of the space, hooking in a horseshoe shape around the edges of the room to the right, the books lending their inherent warmth to the grey metal shelves. At the far end of the stacks was a surprisingly loud thermostat, which disturbed the otherwise silent space. Along the outer wall, which faced the outside of the building’s “O” was a corridor with sofas and soft chairs facing a bank of windows which let in some welcome sunshine. This area was well-populated with students, all intent on their silent studies. Along that wall was a series of doors that led to private study rooms known as “closed carrels,” which were each equipped with a comfortable chair and a generous desk with shelves. They are assigned to doctoral and masters students for an entire academic year, and offer a good-sized, private place for research, study, and reflection.

The library as a whole was clean, orderly, and pleasant. The amount of space devoted to rooms for private and group work was considerable, leaving me with the favorable impression that quiet, reflective time for JKM’s patrons is a high priority. Although it is a part of the seminary’s buildings, the library is a discrete space, set aside for its purpose and clearly valued as an integral part of the campus. Even though there are no grand architectural structures to impress, nor imposing artistic beauties to inspire awe, it is not because there are any failed attempts at such. The library’s appearance, in harmony with that of the seminary, is designed to be minimal, so that it does not compete for the attention
of its patrons, allowing them to better concentrate at the task at hand. In this it succeeds, and thereby achieves a unique and pleasing appeal.

To summarize, I found JKM Library to be orderly, with a logical layout. Although some of its elements were disparate, none of them was particularly jarring, other than the loud thermostat. Comfortable seating was in abundance, and there was a generous allotment of private, quiet space available. It is not a traditionally beautiful structure, but the rock walls and large windows contribute to its unique appeal. The purpose of the library is supported by its layout and furnishings. It is a discrete space within the seminary, and seems to be greatly valued by the larger institution.

Crowell Library

Crowell Library houses the collection that serves Moody Bible Institute in downtown Chicago; its resources serve a graduate and undergraduate population, as well as the distance learning program. It resides in the first floor and basement of Sweeting Hall. The first floor has the Circulation Desk, course reserve materials, media storage, music library, and curriculum lab; the common area has some wooden tables and chairs that are in frequent use by study groups. Conversation at normal volumes is allowed here, and the general feel is cheerful and busy. The layout does not flow very well, due to the rooms branching off in several directions from the common area. A main feature of the floor is a large
staircase with a landing that leads down to the basement, where the main collection is housed.

At the foot of the staircase are three sets of doors, opening to the center, right, and left. Signage giving directions is plentiful, but not very attractively or cohesively presented. The main feature of the large basement is the collection of circulating books and serials, which stands around three sides of the perimeter of the room, and the Reference section which marches down the middle. In the very center is the large, circular wall which surrounds and possibly supports the stairwell. It presents a large, cylindrical wall to half of the room, and it is covered with an enthusiastically colored but unfortunately amateurish mural. The effort to brighten this otherwise dull, grey basement was commendable, but the end result is little better than the blank wall it reportedly replaced. The Archive is also located downstairs, but is open by appointment only, and is not for general student use. A display in its windows showcases news clippings and pictures of Moody students and alumni who were martyred while acting as missionaries. While the material is poignant, the display is not innovative or visually compelling.

A successful attempt at brightening this lower floor is the “Atrium,” a long area of tables and comfortable chairs situated under a peaked, street-level skylight. This space is invariably one of the most popular locations in the library for quiet, comfortable study. Indeed, the seating options are many and varied throughout the entire lower level. Simple wooden tables and chairs abound, and
students make good use of these, spreading out their books, notes, and laptop computers. However, there are not enough electrical outlets, necessitating the use of cumbersome and potentially hazardous cables strung across some of the open walkways between tables.

Other features of the basement are the computer lab, an open area of thirty-eight computers where students can work on their projects; staff offices and the Reference Desk; and the lone group study room, which holds ten to twelve chairs and a large conference table.

The library’s two floors hold a good variety and volume of materials, but the floor plan shows little forethought or planning. The position of the Reference Desk is inconvenient, and the open concept doesn’t lend itself to logical, orderly positioning of resources. However, due to its basement placement, the feel of the lower floor would likely be much more confining were not the floor plan so “open concept.” The colors are uninspired at best and depressing at worst, as the drab light grey of the walls is not helped by the burgundy trim and blue-grey carpet. Still, the color scheme is not distracting or offensive, save for the mural.

In summary, the library in general suffers from a lack of logical, architectural flow, but benefits from clearly delineated sections and rooms, each dedicated to its own purpose. The lack of group or private study rooms is glaring, but is perhaps balanced by the easy quiet that pervades the basement floor. Clearly, the patrons of the library respect and value this space for silent
study. Crowell Library is not beautiful, and has no real guiding theme for its design; it is not offensive, but has no particular appeal, either.

**Paul Bechtold Library**

Paul Bechtold Library serves the Catholic Theological Union in downtown Chicago, whose students are both clergy and lay ministers. It benefits greatly from its fifth floor location, which offers an open, sunny atmosphere by way of large windows and the building’s airy interior architecture that centers around an open staircase lined with half-walls made of glass. On each floor is an art installation that immediately draws the eye, because of the minimalist design everywhere else. The artwork is notable; no one style dominates the building, but all feature sacred subject matter and are very well-chosen for their beauty and impact.

The library’s entrance opens on a small commons area supplied with tasteful, leather pieces from a well-known furniture store and the current serials collection, housed on low shelves. Six library research computers are located near the doors to the right; the offices are down a hallway to the left; and the main collection extends to the right in two columns, with reference books first, then circulating books, then oversize and bound serials in a row at the end of the long room. Also at the far end of the room are several lab computers with a printer. There are various seating options scattered throughout the stacks and at the back of the room; some for the solitary individual and some for small groups;
however, there are only two rooms with a multiple-seating capacity that are available to be reserved.

The walls, shelves, and rug are neutral colors, allowing the books and artwork to be the eye’s main draw. The majority of the space is well-lit by overhead lights and large windows along one wall of the common area. It can seem somewhat narrow and dark toward the back of the room where the oversized books and serials are, but it is not prohibitive to working.

In summary, the library’s simple layout is neat and functional; the overall feeling is one of quiet, cohesive organization. It is the most visually appealing of the three libraries I observed; it is housed in the most architecturally complex building and is deliberate in the incorporation of relevant, high quality artwork into the design of the space. The common area and the stacks are quiet and comfortable, but there is a marked lack of private space for patron use.

**Interaction with Texts**

It is more difficult to quantify my interaction with several chosen books on the design of cathedrals, churches, and Japanese gardens. (See Appendix 1) As I am not a student of architecture, and as this is intended to be a paper for the discipline of Library Science, I merely perused the technical explanations, rather than seeking a mastery of them. I focused instead on the many excellent photographs, seeking for the visual and emotional commonalities they contained.
Visually, I observed that these magnificent buildings and gardens were well-ordered. The order was not necessarily symmetric, though it often was, but there was a definite plan in each. Also, these plans paid attention to the larger views as well as the smaller; sizeable open spaces are very often framed with decorative plants or walls, creating a vista that is both open and reaching, but also filled with exquisite detail. Last, I observed that there was an order built into the buildings and gardens that guided my eye along chosen paths as I looked them over. There was a sense of movement even in the still photographs, but it was a peaceful movement that invited me to look slowly and to linger over all the finer points.

It was in this peaceful, lingering movement of my gaze that I encountered the emotional aspect of these reflective places. They were calming and they drew me in, receiving my eyes and bringing a sense of quietness to my thoughts. By their very serenity, they invited me to stay and to take my fill of what they had to give. It is this welcoming aspect that surprised me most in my viewing of these photographs; in it, there is the undeniable tie between hospitality (the welcoming of the stranger) and the place designed to nurture reflection.

Data Analysis

After completing the full literature review and library observation, I refined the list of chosen “reflective” characteristics to those which would be practical and achievable within the context of an academic theological library.
These characteristics comprise the rubric which is the main product of this study, and which could aid theological librarians in improving the functional hospitality of their libraries.

This study had certain limitations. For example, the sampling of data and writings on the architecture of reflective spaces is far from exhaustive in scope. The libraries I visited were selected for their proximity and ease of access, not for any particular beauty or acclaim. Although the goal of this project was to create a useful, generalized rubric for theological librarians, the resulting assessment and recommended actions must be applied in a particular setting, as appropriate to each library, and must be achievable within space and budget restraints. Therefore, its “success” will be largely dependent upon the actions of individual librarians, working together with their staff and administrators.

Also, as previously mentioned, the literature review and library observation visits almost exclusively explore Christian theological librarianship and libraries. This is a result of the author’s background and the limited scope of this paper.

V. Results and Discussion.

The end goal of this study will result in a rubric of identified characteristics that are designed to enhance the reflective quality of an architectural space. These carefully chosen characteristics will be practical and
achievable by theological librarians within the constraints of budget, time, and reasonable effort of their library’s shareholders.

The created rubric will allow a thoughtful assessment by theological librarians of the space they create and shape for the use of their patrons, regarding its hospitality toward the process of reflection. Their successful use of this rubric will enable theological librarians to make an educated effort to achieve improvements to their libraries that will enable the reflective process of their patrons; a benefit to all those who are engaged in pursuing higher theological education.

Although the scope of this project was designed with the goal of improving theological education through the enhancement of its associated libraries, the process of reflection is necessary and beneficial across many subject areas, intellectual pursuits, and levels of education. The findings of my project will be relevant to many types of libraries, and the applications can be extended to suit their patrons’ individual needs.

The “best practice” use of the rubric would involve librarians using it to “grade” their library space and to be a source of ideas for change. It could also strengthen their position in proposals to fund changes to the space to make it more hospitable to the reflection process of their students and patrons.
VI. Conclusion: The Rubric.

The review of relevant literature and the observation of the selected theological libraries has produced a collection of six ideal traits that are translatable across a variety of planned venues, including libraries. This section will explore each of the traits, and the characteristics of its opposite, in some detail. For the finished rubric, see Appendix 2.

Openness

First among desirable traits is a sense of openness, which can be expressed through a well-ordered layout that is conducive to efficient research and deep study. The floor plan of the library is inviting, with clearly-delineated work zones, and even, adequate lighting.

The opposite characteristic, which libraries would do well to avoid, I have termed “clutter,” which can be expressed through an awkward layout, blocked views, inadequate or drastically uneven lighting. Cluttered libraries have an illogical or ill-planned layout that inhibits patrons and librarians alike in their attempts to locate desired materials and to study with peace of mind.

Quiet

Although quiet is a trait that is falling out of favor with many modern libraries, it is essential to provide for those patrons who wish to lose themselves in deep study and reflection. Optimal libraries provide zones and rooms that remain silent, or at most, have sounds that are natural, regular, and non-interruptive. The public areas or commons are well-separated from study zones.
Disrupted libraries are subject to invasive sounds such as internal or external machinery, talkative patrons, or sounds from beyond the library’s walls. Other troublesome expressions of disruption are unclear delineations of quiet and loud areas and a lack of priority given to private study rooms.

**Beauty**

A library meeting the “Beauty” standard is characterized by an uplifting, pleasing appearance, which is uniformly non-intrusive to the eye or to the concentrating mind. Its color scheme may be warm or cool, but it should complement the overall structure and welcoming atmosphere of the designed space.

Although the classic style of architectural beauty is undeniably appealing, it is generally beyond the scope or need of most contemporary theological libraries. As with the example of the JKM Library, a grand structure is not needed to impart a feeling of harmony. Its consistent look with the rest of the seminary buildings was, in result, soothing and uplifting, although very simple overall. Libraries need not spend untold thousands to achieve a credible rating on the “Beauty” scale, rather, the appearance and atmosphere must present a pleasant, cohesive impression, without any clashing or distracting elements.

For the opposite of beauty, I use the term, “utilitarian.” In utilitarian libraries, little thought is given to what might delight the eye, and few things are done with intent toward aesthetic pleasure. They may include harsh or
depressing color schemes, awkward architectural elements, and amateur, distracting, or disturbing artwork.

**Sacredness**

The *OED* defines “sacred” as, “Dedicated, set apart, exclusively appropriated to some person or some special purpose.” So, for the purpose of this study, a sacred space is one that is dedicated to the purpose for which it is created, not forced to share square footage and resources with other elements of the larger organization to the detriment of both. In a library that expresses this characteristic, the purposes of each area are clear and well-equipped; the mission statement and goals of the library are supported by its parent institution.

A library that is not considered sacred space is forced to share its room and resources with other, conflicting elements. In it, the zones for study, group work, projects, and research are not discrete or are poorly blended. The goals and purposes of this unfortunate library are not valued or respected by those who make directional decisions.

**Solitude**

In a library conforming to the solitude standard, sufficient space is provided for patrons to pursue their work alone, without distraction or disruptions. Throughout the quiet study zone is a busy, yet serene aura of communal solitude. The need for private study is respected and protected by library structure and rules governing the use of study rooms; groups are not automatically valued over single patrons.
In a library that does not epitomize solitude, single study spaces are unavailable or inadequate for patron demand. The vast majority of choice space in the library, as well as preference in policies, is given to groups. There are few or no quiet areas, and work stations are poorly designed and are outfitted only for computer use.

**Comfort**

In a comfortable library, there is a pervading sense of welcome. Resources are conveniently and logically placed; there is a variety of attractive and structurally-sound seating options; some appropriate for relaxation and some for serious study. Temperature and light are appropriate in all areas, and the staff is hospitable, helpful, and knowledgeable.

In an uncomfortable library, resources are poorly organized and hard to find; study spaces are punitive rather than rewarding, and are too cramped for patrons to adequately spread out with the necessary books and/or tools. Furnishings are old and worn, not able to support a patron for hours at a stretch. There is poor or uneven lighting, inappropriate temperature extremes, and an unhelpful, unfriendly, or incompetent staff.

**VII. Future Research.**

The elephant in the room with this project is the question of funding. While it may be easy for librarians, patrons, and administrators alike to agree on
the need for improved aesthetics in our libraries, and while they may respond to the library’s historical ideal of the beautiful, meditative hush and well-appointed furnishings, it may prove to be a significant challenge to find money to make the necessary changes. This is because it is relatively easy to collect data to show how improved technology adds to a library’s services, and relatively difficult to get hard numbers on how improved reflective spaces do. The rubric I’ve created is the first step toward gathering data that might speak on the library’s behalf to potential donors or funders.

With the rubric, it is possible to assess the current status of individual libraries, or groups of libraries, and to provide specific suggestions for their improvement. After making changes according to the value system of the rubric, librarians could create a questionnaire which, when paired with usage data before and after, would quantifiably measure the effects of creating a more pleasing space, conducive to reflection. With hard data in hand, it might be significantly easier to make a case for increased awareness and spending toward a library’s improved aesthetics. It would also be easier to resist the urge (or urgings of others) to adopt technological advancements with little to no thought of a library’s equally important, low-tech products and services.

The rubric itself could be strengthened by pairing it with lists of universally-acknowledged libraries of the highest caliber. If the characteristics and values championed here were matched up with examples of real-life
libraries of an exemplary nature, its arguments would be more persuasive and librarians would have role models, so to speak, to follow in their plans for change and improvement.

Although this study has focused on theological libraries and their particular need to be receptive and hospitable to their patrons’ process of reflection, the research and the rubric are certainly applicable to libraries of all kinds. Also, the rubric of traits is meant to be applied to already existing libraries, but a study that emphasized architectural elements aimed at the same goal would be very useful to librarians considering new construction projects.
Works Cited


Appendix 1: Bibliography of Texts Exploring Reflective Spaces


### Appendix 2: Reflective Characteristics Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4 - Exemplary</th>
<th>3 - Above Average</th>
<th>2 - Below Average</th>
<th>1 - Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Openness</strong></td>
<td>The rooms feel open and inviting; the well-planned layout is conducive to study; each area is well-lit; there is a logical flow to the floor plan that aids patron navigation and librarian assistance.</td>
<td>The library is generally well-planned; study areas are well-appointed, with adequate lighting; the layout is open and orderly.</td>
<td>The floor plan is not ideal for the librarians' and patrons' needs; many workarounds are employed in daily functioning; lighting is uneven; structures block, rather than reveal, the library space.</td>
<td>The library is characterized by dark areas and cluttered stacks; the layout is awkward and difficult to navigate; there are many blocked views and no sense of a logical floor plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quiet</strong></td>
<td>Study areas are plentiful, quiet, and tranquil; any sounds there are natural, minimal, and non-interruptive; public areas are well-separated.</td>
<td>Quiet zones and public spaces are appropriately defined and boundaries are respected; private study areas are adequate.</td>
<td>There is crossover between study and public zones; quiet spaces are hard to find and are unpleasant. There are some intrusive noises.</td>
<td>There are many unregulated sounds (machinery, talking, outside noises); no clear boundaries between quiet and loud zones. Few if any quiet spaces.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beauty</strong></td>
<td>The library space is a unified whole, and is uplifting and pleasing; artwork is professional, relevant, and non-intrusive; the color scheme is pleasant; furniture is well-chosen and in excellent repair.</td>
<td>The feel of the library is pleasant; artwork and furnishings are generally well-chosen; though there may be a bit of mismatch, no elements are truly distracting or dissonant.</td>
<td>There is no unified sense of design; colors and styles of furnishings are unappealing; artwork is lacking or in mediocre taste; some elements are shabby or neglected.</td>
<td>The library is stark and utilitarian, with little thought given to what pleases the eye; there are harsh or depressing color schemes; amateur, distracting, or disturbing artwork is displayed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacredness</td>
<td>The library's purpose is expressed in its physical and service offerings, which support the patrons; the library is respected and generously funded by the larger institution.</td>
<td>The library is adequately supported by its parent institution; portions of the library shared with other functions/purposes are minimal and unobtrusive.</td>
<td>The library shares space with other departments; the crossover is somewhat disruptive; inadequate funding is evident.</td>
<td>Little to no dedicated library space; library space is shared with other/conflicting purposes; the purposes of the library are not valued or respected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitude</td>
<td>Sufficient space given to pursue studies alone, without distraction; throughout the study zone is a quiet aura of communal solitude; need for alone study is respected and protected by library structure and rules.</td>
<td>Options for private study spaces are comfortable, pleasant, and adequate in number; library practices support patrons' individual study habits.</td>
<td>Individual study spaces have been crowded out by computers, technology, and group study rooms; rules governing quiet zones are lax and not generally respected.</td>
<td>Few or no single study spaces available; all choice space in the library is given to group study; no designated quiet areas; workstations are designed solely for computer use.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>All resources are convenient for patrons needs; furniture is plentiful, comfortable, new, and attractive; temperature and lighting are appropriate in all areas; library staff are helpful and knowledgeable.</td>
<td>Resources are generally convenient and well-organized; seating options and study spaces are well-lit, comfortable, and sufficient for all except the busiest times;</td>
<td>Seating and study areas show signs of wear and tear, though basically comfortable; resources and staff are sometimes hard to find; some spaces may be too hot or cold; lighting is uneven.</td>
<td>Resources are poorly organized or hard to find; study spaces are inadequate for patron needs; seating and tables are old and worn, uncomfortable. Poor lighting, uncomfortable temperatures; unhelpful, unfriendly staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>