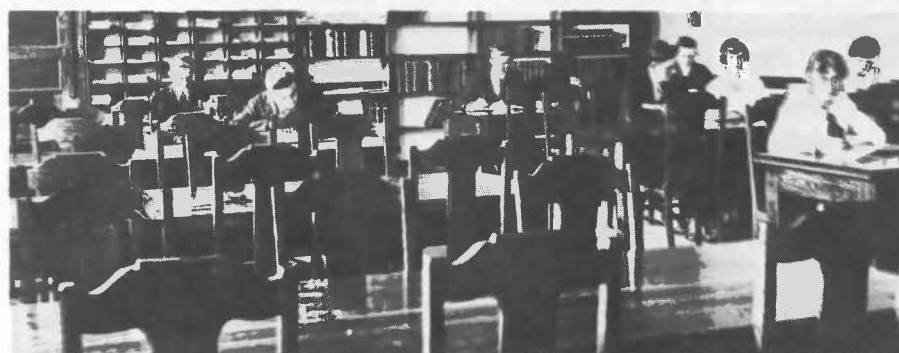
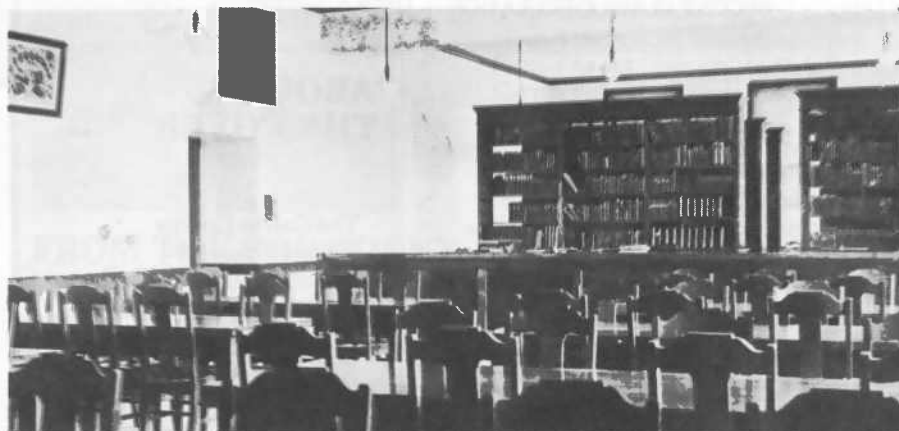


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CALVIN COLLEGE AND SEMINARY LIBRARY

THE PAST

by Conrad J. Bult



Hekman Memorial Library

Scriptural and doctrinal knowledge were of the utmost importance to the “de kleyne luyden” (common people) who, with their leaders, established the Christian Reformed Church in the United States and Canada. When these individuals immigrated to America, many carried with them a Staten Bijbel (Bible translation approved by the Synod of Dort) similar in size to the pulpit Bibles used in our churches today. Arnold Mulder in his book, *Americans From Holland*, has written that “Dutch folk, even some of the most illiterate of them, were theologians by instinct.” People such as these judged the contents of their ministers’ sermons with singular discernment and demanded spiritual leaders who had the ability to both quote Scripture and expound at length on various points of doctrine. Those who attended services in the few churches of the fledgling denomination hoped that the Seminary, founded in 1876, would supply educated clerics to fill the vacant pulpits and also provide future pastors.

The Calvin Theological Seminary occupied the second floor of Grand Rapids’ Williams Street Christian School during the years 1876-1892. According to Seminary Professor Martin J. Wyngaarden (1891-1978), there was in this building “in the southeast corner a separate small room for books, including mostly old Reformed writings.” The first *Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church* in which a *Bibliothecaris* (Dutch for Librarian) is listed is the one dated 1892. One of the three Seminary professors, Rev. Gerrit E. Boer (1832-1904), had this title and retained it until 1904, the year of his death. No doubt, Boer’s many duties included responsibility for the “library room,” located in the northeast corner on the main floor of the new Theological School and Calvin College Building on the corner of Madison and Franklin Streets. Students and faculty members made use of this building for the first time in 1892.

In the Calvin College Yearbook for 1895-1896, there is this description of the “Library and Reading Room”:

A large, well-lighted room has been set apart for a reading room. here will be found at all times good books, magazines, and papers.

Incidentally, a student was allowed to draw out one book at a time for three days, and if the borrower desired, he might renew the book for a similar period. During the years 1905-1914, Seminary Professor Gerrit K. Hemkes (1838-1920) served as Librarian. Reporting to the Board of Trustees in 1910, he mentioned that seventy books had been added to the collection during the past school year and that the collection now numbered about 4,000 volumes. Following Hemkes as

Librarian in 1914 was Professor Ralph Janssen (1874-1942), Professor of Exegetical Theology in the Seminary.

This first building on the “new” Franklin Campus was the Administration Building and the library was relocated there during 1917. The books were transferred in a move which then Assistant Librarian Ralph Stob chronicled in the following manner:

The books were hauled by truck, but through the loading and unloading, the arrangement in their proper order was completely gone. Just to put the books in their proper place on the shelf was a gigantic task.

The library’s new quarters were two basement rooms, one a reading room and the other a stack room. Not pleased with the subterranean location, Librarian Janssen penned these words in his 1920 report to the Board:

Ever since our removal to the new College building it has been a regrettable circumstance that obliged us relegating the library to the basement-room. A more undesirable place for a library could not well be wanted.

From 1922 through 1926 the Librarian was Professor Ralph Stob (1894-1965), whose primary responsibility was teaching Greek in the College. Neither Stob nor his predecessors were full-time librarians. What they did as librarians was in addition to their teaching tasks, which each considered the more significant part of his calling in life. During Janssen’s tenure, Stob had, as he writes, “made a careful study of Dewey and indexed accordingly.” The reading room of the library was opened afternoons for the first time in 1925. The hours were from one to three in the afternoon. Prior to this, the library opened its doors for student use from about eight to twelve in the morning only. Pressure from students caused the change and a student rhapsodized in the November 1915 *Chimes*:

Isn’t it grand and glorious to find the library open in the afternoon when you want to study for that three o’clock class and are tired of sitting on the floor in the waiting room trying to keep the babble of voices out of your ears sufficiently to concentrate on that awful Archaeology?

By the way, the “waiting room” referred to was not a part of the library but a sort of social sanctuary provided for the students.

Stob resigned in 1926 and gave as his reason that “the work is too much to carry in addition to all the teaching.” The library now, as Stob pointed out, had 13,800 volumes. When he had started as Assistant Librarian in 1915 the collection numbered 3,500. Stob closed his note of resignation with this



Views of Hekman Memorial Library with Reading Rooms



Library Reference Room

remark, "I should hail the day when we had one person for the library alone." In a document, *Instructions from Prof. Stob, Librarian*, ostensibly written for his successor, Miss Johanna Timmer, there appears the following:

On this day, the seventh of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty-seven, I, Ralph Stob, do depart this life of librarian of the Theological School and Calvin College of the Christian Reformed Church in America. . . . I have labored long and now I rest my weary head.

For the brief period from 1927 to 1928, Miss Johanna Timmer served as both librarian and Girls' Adviser. Her parting words were:

I trust you can appreciate my position in asserting that the positions of Girls' Adviser and of Librarian do not dovetail into each other. . . . I rejoice that the faculties are at this time recommending the appointment of a full-time librarian.

Interesting to note are the costs submitted by Miss Timmer in her report dated May 1928. Behind them appear the current Library figures.

Books	\$1229.23	Now	\$135,000
Periodicals	267.97	Now	95,000
Binding	280.65	Now	24,000

The Hekman Memorial Library was dedicated on March 8, 1928. Prior to the dedication, the books had been moved from the Administration Building in one day's time under the supervision of Librarian Timmer. About this new structure the 1928 *Prism* reported:

The Hekman Memorial Library now stands upon our campus a tribute to the memory of Edsko Hekman, because his widow and his sons, Henry, John, and Jelle, felt that his life, now ended on earth, must nevertheless go on here: in the impulses and works of those chosen to impound the master spirits of the age.

In the hearts and minds of those that love Calvin, un-failing gratitude will live while stone and mortar shall last.

Editor Dr. Henry Beets devoted almost a page and a half of the March 16, 1928 *Banner* to the dedicatory ceremonies. There is a report of the sequence of events and extensive resumes of all speeches. Among those who spoke were S. H. Ranck, Librarian of the Grand Rapids Public Library, and Seminary Professor Louis Berkhof. In one of his closing paragraphs Beets said:

We are sure of it that the dedication of the new building

was greatly enjoyed by people from nearby as well as from far away. May God continue to shower his blessings upon those who donated the building, as well as upon those who continue to use it.

After the resignation of Miss Timmer, Miss Elizabeth Vertregt, later Mrs. Floris Vander Stoep, became the first full-time librarian to serve the College and Seminary. She held this position from 1928 until 1931 when she, too, submitted a resignation:

As I was married in April, I shall be resigning from my duties as librarian in August. As I look back over the years, the work accomplished seems slight, but I hope I have contributed something to the progress of the library.

By 1931 the library had 19,800 books, most of which had book pockets and cards placed in them during the summer of 1930, a feat accomplished by the Librarian and two assistants in six week's time. Also, in conjunction with the English Department, Miss Vertregt prepared lectures for freshmen students on how to use the library. This activity on the part of the Librarian was something of an innovation at the time.

Known to many as Josie, Miss Josephine Baker took the place of Miss Vertregt in the fall of 1931. Miss Baker's picture appeared on the front page of *Chimes* and next to the picture were these words of introduction:

She entered library work because she likes it and intends to continue it—well, indefinitely. But we have our doubts. In fact, our only objection to Miss Baker is that she is a blonde. And since "gentlemen prefer blondes," we fear that she will follow in the path of her predecessor, Miss Vertregt, who, being a blonde also, left us this summer to gladden the life of the seminarian who preferred her.

Writing in the May 1, 1941 issue of the *Calvin College Alumni Letter*, Miss Baker stated that the library now had 25,500 cataloged books of which 8,000 had been added during the last ten years. Also, she mentioned that the library subscribed to about 100 periodicals. At the close of her article, Miss Baker urged those who had never been in the library to "make a point to see the building," and she also affirmed that "we are proud of our library, both the building and the book collection."

After World War II, neither library study space nor the book collection was adequate for the greatly increased enrollment. The December 10, 1946 *Chimes* contained a quotation from Librarian Baker who remarked that "a new addition to the library is definitely needed, and for this addition—new

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books." Professor of English Henry Zylstra (1909-1956) described the library situation in these rather blunt sentences which appeared in a 1947 *Banner* article:

But it is too small, much too small. There is not room enough for the books, and there is not room enough to study them. The building served 400 students well a few years ago; it cannot serve 1,200 students well now. As for study space, there are chairs in the reading room for 140 students, as closely packed as spoons in a box. During the busy hours of a regular school day, each of these chairs is occupied. Even so, some students must study elbow to chin, under the campus trees, or slumped against their lockers in the basement of the main building. . . . Calvin's librarian is highly trained, is devoted to her work, and she has good assistants, but the opportunities for service are infinite and the hours are limited.

Also in 1947, Calvin President Henry Schultze alerted the Board to the problems concerning the library structure. Schultze chose to relay these ominous words of warning presented to him by Miss Baker:

There are deep cracks, growing deeper, in the floors and the walls. Plaster is constantly loosening up and falling. Some of the doors are no longer serviceable because of the settling of the building.

Decisions were made to enlarge the library and on March 16, 1951 the "new" library was dedicated. Now students and faculty found that the library contained a reference room with mahogany tables and captain's chairs, a reading room with blond furniture, and also a periodical reading room. The closed stacks could accommodate 120,000 volumes and seating capacity was 240, 100 more than before. Those who attended Calvin in the fifties and sixties have vivid memories of the "blond room" and the "dark room."

The December 15, 1950 *Chimes* reported the news that the library committee had proposed a Faculty Library Director who will "take over duties of deciding policy and making long-range plans." Professor of Speech Lester De Koster was appointed by the 1951 Synod to this position. Also in 1951, Miss Barbara Sluiter, presently in charge of Cataloging Services, joined the library staff.



Josephine Baker



Lester De Koster

Miss Baker had served as Librarian from the fall of 1931 through the summer of 1951. In her 1932 report, she stated that 560 books had been cataloged during the past year; by 1949 the number was 1000. For many years Miss Baker was Calvin's only professionally trained librarian; after 1951 she served as Reader's Adviser, a position she held until 1964, her last year of service. Students found Miss Baker a very helpful person; a 1940 *Prism* states:

To Miss Baker, our librarian, we extend a word of appreciation for her patience and cooperation in assisting us with our book selections and reference material. Patient, kind, and helpful, we have learned to rely on her in the

solution of our problems connected with outside work. Her thirty-four years of service made her a very familiar figure on campus to many students, especially those whom she kindly but firmly asked to stop talking.

During the De Koster era, which covered the years 1951-1969, many significant events occurred. In 1951, a friend and neighbor of Calvin, Mr. Leo Cayvan, donated his collection of 9,000 records to the library and these were housed in the Cayvan Room located in the basement of the Hekman Library. Presently, the Cayvan Room is located on the third floor of the library and serves both the casual listener and the music student who desires to hear class assignments. From the Detling estate the library received 4,000 books in 1954. Also, this was the year the library acquired its first microfilm reader, a venture with great possibilities for the future, since at the time the library had but one film. After seven years of service, Miss Wilhemina Twight, later Mrs. Jerald White, left the staff in 1955. Her place as Circulation Librarian was taken by Miss Annette Buurstra. Perforated McBee Keysort Call Cards, the kind still filled out today by all who borrow books at Calvin, were used for the first time in 1957. The house at 752 Giddings became the "Library Annex" in 1959. Here there was space for about fifty students to study under the watchful eye of Mr. Albert Lewen. The decade of the fifties closed with Director De Koster's suggestion that the library gather all materials available on John Calvin and Calvinism in book and microform. He hoped that the library would become the major resource center in North America for the study of Calvin and Calvinism.

Planning sessions for the new library building to be erected on the Knollcrest Campus took many hours of library staff time during the early sixties. A shift from the Dewey Decimal System to the Library of Congress System had begun in 1952 and by 1960 all but 8,000 out of a collection of 85,000 volumes had been reclassified. Students who came to the library in the fall of 1960 had 7,560 more books than the year before to choose from. Also, 795 current periodical titles were present for their perusal.

Van Raalte's books, letters and sermons came to the library in 1962 as a gift from the publisher William B. Eerdmans, Sr. For both faculty and student research, this collection is without peer due to the fact that Rev. Van Raalte and his followers began the settlement in Holland, Michigan, in 1847. Since 1963, this collection, with many others, has been housed in the Colonial Origins Collection, formerly known as the Heritage Hall Historical Collections. For nineteen years the Colonial Origins Collection has occupied several rooms on the south side of the first floor of the library. Herbert Brinks, Curator of the Colonial Origins Collection and Denominational Archivist, first began working with the materials in 1963. Through his efforts and those of others, the collection has greatly expanded and now includes books, pamphlets, periodicals, letters, and archives of the Christian Reformed Church and related institutions. All these resources are essential for anyone who wishes to search out past information about the Christian Reformed Church or the Dutch people in the United States and Canada.

Three librarians, Conrad Bult, Marvin Monsma, and Myrtle Van Laar, joined the staff in 1965, followed by Miss Evelyn Weidenaar in 1966. Miss Van Laar left the staff in 1971. Adrianus Velthoen and Sierd Woudstra served as theological librarians in the late sixties. New to the staff in 1969 were Peter De Klerk, Theological Librarian, and Stephen Lambers who, when he came, was in charge of Circulation and Information Services.

Miss Annette Buurstra left the library in 1968 for a position on the staff of the Michigan State Library. For about a decade and a half, Annette had been a part of the library and had served as Circulation Librarian and later Reference Librarian. Through her efforts the Curriculum Center, now a part of the Instructional Resources Center, was established in 1955 as a service for teachers and members of the Education Department. Since 1967 the library has been a partial depository for United States Government documents. The library became such a depository as a result of conversations between Director De Koster and Congressman Gerald R. Ford. At the present time, this collection numbers about 125,000 items and takes up about a quarter of the space on the first floor of the library. John Smilde was in charge of this collection for the years 1969-1980.

Delegates to the 1969 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church elected Director De Koster as the new Editor of *The Banner* and his position was taken by Marvin Monsma, the present Director. Lester De Koster typified the scholar-librarian, and the library collection as developed and strengthened during his tenure reflected his concern for Calvin and Calvinism, the humanities, and a strong periodical collection. At his departure, the library contained about 190,000 volumes and devoted \$22,000 per year to periodical subscriptions. On June 10, 1970, dedication ceremonies for the new Calvin College and Seminary Library took place in the Fine Arts Center auditorium. "Philobiblon: Of the Love of Books" was the title of De Koster's dedicatory address, which he closed with these ringing words:

Philobiblon! In the love of books we lift our voices, careful to recall what every tyrant and enemy of the spirit knows and fears, now as in the days when Milton said: For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are: nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth: and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men!"

About 200,000 books from the Hekman Library on the Franklin Campus were transferred to the new library in the summer of 1970. Credit for accomplishing this challenging task in a month's time must be given to Peter De Klerk and six student assistants who made many trips between campuses in a rental van loaded with fifteen book trucks. The books were taken from the old library stacks in their proper shelf order and, consequently, could be replaced on the shelves in the new library in the same manner with a minimum of confusion and waste of time. No longer did the College and Seminary have a collection of books in two locations, something which had been a fact since 1963 when the Library-Classroom building at Knollcrest had first been opened for student use. The new library featured open stacks with all books and bound volumes of periodicals shelved in a single Library of Congress classification scheme sequence, could accommodate 325,000 volumes, and had study space for 1100 students. By 1976 the library had its first cathode ray terminal which enabled the library to catalog its books by using the computer resources of the Ohio College Library Center. Presently six professional librarians are on the staff and the last to join is Mrs. Johanna Duyst, who received her appointment as Acquisitions Librarian in 1977.

Contained in Director Monsma's 1977 report, the following sentences served as a sobering prediction of the library's future problems:

Once considered plush and more than adequate, the

library facilities are now beginning to show signs of being inadequate.

His 1979 comments about space were:

When the present library facility was built, it was to have a capacity for a 325,000-volume collection. It was predicted that this capacity would be adequate for ten years of growth. The book and periodical collection now totals approximately 290,000 volumes.

Once again the problem of space which had haunted all previous directors had returned to face Monsma and all others on the staff. Future plans for expansion will be completed only after many sessions in which architects, librarians, administrators, and faculty will air their views.

This somewhat anecdotal history of the library for the years 1876-1980 can not, of course, include all the names of students, assistants, and professional librarians who made the library what it is today after more than a century of existence. The intellectual edifice given the name Calvin College and Seminary Library is the result of the hard work, sacrifice, hope, and vision of all who can identify with the library in one way or another. Included in this "All" are past and present faculty members in the College and Seminary, past and present donors who have given or continue to give money or books, and, last but not least, all alumni, each of whom we hope has fond memories of the time spent studying, reading, or doing whatever in the library.



THE PRESENT

by Stephen L. Lambers

What Goes Into Putting a Book on the Shelf?

There are a third of a million books in Calvin's library. Approximately ten thousand are added every year. How do they get there? What goes into putting a book on the shelf? To begin with, who chooses what to buy? At Calvin this is the prerogative of the College and Seminary faculty. The 1981-82 budget for books amounts to \$148,000. More than twenty percent of this will be spent on religious and theological works. Librarians order books particularly for the reference collection but also in areas where lacunae (gaps) in the collection may be developing.

To assist the faculty in selecting the best newly published books in their respective disciplines, the library subscribes to a reviewing service of *Choice* magazine. *Choice* provides cards containing 200- to 300-word reviews of new scholarly books. Written by persons learned in the particular subject area, they provide a more objective view than that which is given in the biased "blurbs" of the publisher.

The next step in the process is the purchase of the books. At Calvin, Johanna Duyst has that responsibility. To the uninitiated the ordering and receiving procedures appear routine, but they are not. Knowledge of the complexities of bibliographic entry, familiarity with methods of tracking down and obtaining cryptic foreign titles, and firm dealing with those who would be your agents (book jobbers) make it necessary to have a trained professional doing the work. Jo says, "Acquisi-

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Barbara Sluiter



Johanna Duyst

tion librarians get gray because of books without invoices, invoices without books, books that don't come, and books that come twice."

Barbara Sluiter, cataloger, describes what happens next: *After the books are received, a temporary card is filed in the public catalog. A computer slip, if available, is checked with the book so that less time is needed at the computer. The call number is checked with the shelf list, the book is cataloged into the terminal, and catalog cards are ordered. The books are then processed, i. e., taped (a strip of magnetic tape is inserted to insure legitimate circulation), stamped, and labeled with a call number. After the cards arrive (approximately one week), the books are checked for accuracy. Every two weeks a book list is typed for the faculty and the cards are filed in the public catalog.*

After the cataloging is completed, the books are placed for one week in the New Book Room, where faculty members are offered first opportunity to browse among them. Subsequently student assistants shelve them in the open stacks.

During the busy months of term-paper time (October-November and March-April) more than 500 books a day are checked out of the library. Total book circulation for the past school year, not inclusive of reserve reading materials, reached 82,000. That the Library serves the community as well as its own faculty, students, and alumni is revealed by the fact that one-sixth of that amount was checked out by others.

How Important Is the Library to the Student?

The Calvin Library lies at a major campus intersection with the Commons to the north, the Fine Arts Center to the east, the Seminary to the south, and the College Center to the west. Thus it is not by happenstance that it is the focus of daily activities for many students. When the semester ends and the students have left, the Library seems like a church auditorium on a weekday.

Along with the expected activities of reading, research, and study, the library is also used as a place for making photo copies, listening to recorded music, socializing, staring out the window, and sleeping. Romances are carried on there. So too are disputes—like the one on study space about which we found the following exchange of notes between one M. E. V. H. and various respondents:

I do not object to others using this carrel when I am not here. But, regardless of the supposedly great demand for this study space, it is imperative that these books remain here; but greedy librarians are persona non grata.

M. E. V. H.

Librarians are not greedy. They are simply doing their job. If you need these books please check them out so that people can know where they are and so others may use them after your two weeks. Until you check out your books, everyone has a right to use them and they will be put back on the shelves.

D. J.

All these books belong to me. I will have much difficulty "checking them out."

M. E. V. H.

I do not see how you can reserve the right to claim this carrel. Of course we will use it if you are not here; in fact, if you do happen to appear while it is in use we have the right to continue to use it.

Thank you,
H. B.

Very true! However, I understand why you don't understand how I have "the right to claim this carrel." I think the reason lies in the fact that I haven't reserved the right to "claim" the carrel. I thought my first note made that clear.

M. E. V. H.



