

## Theological Libraries and Library Associations in Europe



# Theological Libraries and Library Associations in Europe

*A Festschrift on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of  
BETH*

*Edited by*

Leo Kenis

*with*

Penelope R. Hall  
Marek Rostkowski



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# Introduction

50 years ago, on 26 September 1972, the 'Conseil international des associations de bibliothèques de théologie' was established in the Netherlands, an association of the theological library associations from six European countries. One year later, on 21 September 1973, the association formally obtained Dutch royal approval, which was at that time still required. It is to mark and celebrate this anniversary that this book is being published, containing thoughts, commentary, and reflections on the recent history of a number of theological libraries and associations. In 1999 the association changed its name to 'Bibliothèques européennes de théologie' (BETH).

Much has changed in these 50 years, not only in the association and among its members, but also in the context in which the association was and is active. In 1972, the Cold War still dominated relations in Europe. The Conseil was an entirely Western European activity; the countries behind the Iron Curtain did not participate. Now, the members and participants of the BETH conferences come from almost every country in Europe.

The 50 years of the Conseil/BETH were also 50 years of increasing secularisation, with both decreasing involvement in church organisations and willingness to contribute to their costs. Many theological faculties, seminaries and other church institutions were closed or merged with others, abbeys and monasteries were dissolved. And the cultural legacy of these institutions, including the libraries, was not always handled very carefully.

In 1972, library automation was still in its infancy; today, it has become indispensable. Library catalogues are also almost all accessible on the World Wide Web. In many other respects, too, the work of a librarian has become much more technical. Terms such as digitisation, metadata, data management and open science, which were previously unknown, have become commonplace among theological librarians.

In financial terms as well, much has changed. Libraries were and are regularly confronted with cutbacks. On the other hand, prices for academic books and journals, both paper and digital, have risen sharply.

All these developments had major consequences not only for libraries but also for library associations. Where libraries were closed down, associations lost members. But where borders were opened, new members came. Financial constraints stimulates cooperation and is also a stimulus for the Open Science movement. New techniques lead to new initiatives; the internet has made more cooperation possible.

In the contributions in this volume, various colleagues discuss the developments in their libraries and associations. As for BETH itself, it can be said that the developments outlined above have had a positive effect on the association. Its membership has more than doubled, it has developed from a rather informal consultative body to an active association whose conferences attract more visitors every year. The need to cooperate across borders became increasingly evident.

The first part of this jubilee volume contains scholarly contributions on the recent history of theological libraries all over Europe. It is not at all the intention – nor is it realistic – to offer an overall, more or less exhaustive overview of the European landscape of theological libraries. Rather, the various contributions provide a richly varied picture of libraries in a limited number of European countries with very diverse historical and socio-political backgrounds. The histories of different types of libraries described here are representative of the great diversity of the religious and ecclesiastical landscape in Europe over the past century. This part of the book also contains contributions covering libraries in Central and Eastern Europe, showing how much BETH has expanded and how diverse the history of its members is. We are particularly pleased that our overview also includes a contribution on a library from Ukraine, which gives an idea of the exceptional journey libraries in countries from the former Soviet sphere of influence went through. Our Ukrainian colleagues are not yet members of BETH, but we have had cordial relations for some time that hold out hope for the prospect of formal membership. The current crisis, caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, only makes us more determined to strengthen our cooperation in the future.

The second part of the book pays special attention to the wide context and new conditions within which theological libraries have had to operate for the last half a century. Of course, the ongoing computerisation and automation of library work has become crucial in a digital world that poses challenges but, more often, offers opportunities to realise the significant function of theological libraries in the 21st century. This is visible in a number of new or renewed tools made available to the user today. Moreover, the fundamental changes in theology and in church life have prompted European theological librarians to increase their cooperation and the exchange of experiences and knowledge. This has led to cross-border networks, in which librarians from all over Europe are increasingly working together.

Finally, the third section of this book contains short historical overviews of BETH and its members. The survey shows that our association is changing with time, but that it has also been expanded by the accession of library

associations from Central Europe and Scandinavia. Due to this, BETH can look forward with confidence and enthusiasm to another 50 years working with theological libraries all over Europe.

I would like to conclude this introduction by thanking everyone who contributed to the creation of this book: the colleagues who wrote a contribution; the translators of various contributions and abstracts; the staff of Brill publishers; the editors and in particular the chief editor, without whom this book would never have come about.

Geert Harmanny  
BETH President

## Introduction

Il y a 50 ans, le 26 septembre 1972, le Conseil international des associations de bibliothèques de théologie, une association regroupant les associations de bibliothèques de théologie de six pays européens, a été fondé aux Pays-Bas. Une année après, le 21 septembre 1973, l'association a obtenu officiellement l'approbation royale néerlandaise, ce qui à l'époque était encore nécessaire. Ce livre-ci, qui contient des pensées, des commentaires et des réflexions sur l'histoire récente d'un certain nombre de bibliothèques et d'associations théologiques, est publié pour marquer et célébrer cet anniversaire. En 1999, l'association a changé son nom en Bibliothèques européennes de théologie (BETH).

Au cours de ces 50 années, beaucoup de choses ont changé, non seulement au sein de l'association et parmi ses membres mais aussi dans le contexte dans lequel l'association était et est toujours active. En 1972, la guerre froide dominait encore les relations en Europe. Le Conseil avait ses activités uniquement en Europe occidentale. Les pays situés derrière le rideau de fer n'y participaient pas. Aujourd'hui, les membres de BETH et les participants aux conférences sont originaires de presque tous les pays de l'Europe.

Ces 50 années du Conseil/de BETH ont été également 50 années de sécularisation croissante, avec à la fois une diminution de la participation aux organisations ecclésiastiques et une diminution de la volonté de contribuer à leurs coûts. De nombreuses facultés de théologie, des séminaires et d'autres institutions ecclésiastiques ont été fermés ou sont fusionnés avec d'autres, des abbayes et des monastères ont été dissous. On n'a pas toujours traité avec beaucoup de soin l'héritage culturel de ces institutions, y compris les bibliothèques.

En 1972, l'automatisation des bibliothèques n'en était qu'à ses débuts. Aujourd'hui elle est devenue indispensable. Aussi les catalogues des bibliothèques sont presque tous accessibles sur le World Wide Web. À bien d'autres égards le travail du bibliothécaire est devenu également beaucoup plus technique. Des termes tels que numérisation, métadonnées, gestion des données et science ouverte, qui auparavant étaient inconnus, sont devenus courants parmi les bibliothécaires théologiques.

Sur le plan financier beaucoup de choses ont changé également. Les bibliothèques ont été et sont régulièrement confrontées à des coupes budgétaires. D'autre part, les prix des livres et des revues universitaires, sur papier ainsi que digital, ont fortement augmenté.

Tous ces développements ont eu des conséquences énormes non seulement pour les bibliothèques mais aussi pour les associations de bibliothèques. Là où les bibliothèques ont été fermées, les associations ont perdu des membres.

Mais par contre là où les frontières ont été ouvertes, il y a eu de nouveaux membres. La pénurie financière stimule la coopération et est également un stimulant pour le mouvement de la Science Ouverte. Les nouvelles techniques mènent à de nouvelles initiatives. Grâce à l'internet beaucoup plus de coopération est devenue possible.

Dans les contributions de ce recueil plusieurs collègues discutent des développements dans leurs bibliothèques et dans leurs associations. En ce qui concerne BETH elle-même, on peut dire que les développements décrits ci-dessus ont eu un effet positif sur l'association. Le nombre de ses membres a été plus que doublé et l'association s'est transformée d'un organe consultatif plutôt informel à une association active dont les conférences attirent chaque année plus de visiteurs. La nécessité de la coopération au-delà des frontières est devenue de plus en plus évidente.

La première partie de ce recueil-anniversaire contient des contributions scientifiques sur l'histoire récente des bibliothèques théologiques dans toute l'Europe. L'intention n'est point du tout – et en outre cela ne serait pas réaliste – de faire un tour d'horizon plus ou moins complet du paysage européen des bibliothèques théologiques. Les différentes contributions donnent plutôt une image riche et variée des bibliothèques d'un nombre limité de pays européens dans les contextes historiques et socio-politiques très divers. Les histoires des différents types de bibliothèques décrites sont représentatives de la grande diversité du paysage religieux et ecclésiastique en Europe au cours du siècle dernier. Cette partie du livre contient également des contributions sur les bibliothèques d'Europe centrale et orientale, ce qui montre à quel point BETH s'est étendu et combien l'histoire de ses membres est diverse. Nous sommes particulièrement heureux que notre recueil contienne également une contribution sur une bibliothèque ukrainienne ce qui donne une idée du parcours exceptionnel qu'ont traversé les bibliothèques des pays de l'ancienne sphère d'influence soviétique. Nos collègues ukrainiens ne sont pas encore membres de BETH, mais depuis quelque temps nous entretenons des relations cordiales avec eux ce qui donne des perspectives prometteuses pour une adhésion formelle. La crise actuelle, causée par l'invasion russe en Ukraine, ne fait que nous rendre encore plus résolu de renforcer notre coopération dans l'avenir.

La deuxième partie de l'ouvrage prête une attention particulière au contexte large et aux nouvelles conditions dans lesquelles les bibliothèques théologiques ont dû travailler pendant le dernier demi-siècle. Évidemment l'informatisation et l'automatisation continues du travail des bibliothèques sont devenues cruciales dans un monde numérique qui pose des défis mais, encore plus souvent, offre des opportunités pour réaliser la fonction significative des bibliothèques théologiques au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ça se montre par un nombre d'outils nouveaux ou

renouvelés qui sont à la disposition de l'utilisateur d'aujourd'hui. En plus, les changements fondamentaux dans la théologie et dans la vie ecclésiastique ont incité les bibliothécaires théologiques européens à intensifier leur coopération et l'échange d'expériences et de connaissances. Cela a donné naissance à des réseaux transfrontaliers, dans lesquels les bibliothécaires de toute l'Europe travaillent de plus en plus ensemble.

La troisième partie de ce livre contient de courts aperçus historiques de BETH et de ses membres. L'aperçu montre que notre association évolue avec le temps, mais qu'elle se voit aussi élargie par l'adhésion des associations de bibliothécaires de l'Europe centrale et de la Scandinavie. Par conséquent BETH peut envisager avec confiance et enthousiasme encore un autre 50 ans de travail avec les bibliothèques théologiques de toute l'Europe.

Je voudrais conclure cette introduction en remerciant tous ceux qui ont contribué à la création de ce livre : les collègues qui ont écrit une contribution, les traducteurs de diverses contributions et de divers résumés, le personnel des éditions Brill, la rédaction et en particulier le rédacteur en chef : sans lui ce livre n'aurait jamais pu être réalisé.

Geert Harmanny  
Président de BETH

# Einführung

Vor 50 Jahren, am 26. September 1972, wurde in den Niederlanden der 'Conseil international des associations de bibliothèques de théologie' gegründet, ein Verein der theologischen Bibliotheksverbände in sechs europäischen Ländern. Ein Jahr später, am 21. September 1973, erhielt der Verein die (damals noch erforderliche) förmliche königliche Genehmigung in den Niederlanden. Anlässlich dieses Jubiläums erscheint dieses Buch mit einer Reihe von Beiträgen zur jüngeren Geschichte theologischer Bibliotheken und Vereine. 1999 änderte der Verein seinen Namen in 'Bibliothèques européennes de théologie' (BETH).

In diesen 50 Jahren hat sich viel verändert, sowohl im Verein und bei seinen Mitgliedern als auch in dem Kontext, in dem der Verein tätig war und ist. 1972 beherrschte noch der Kalte Krieg die Beziehungen in Europa. Der Conseil war ein rein westeuropäischer Verein, die Länder hinter dem Eisernen Vorhang nahmen nicht teil. Mittlerweile kommen die Mitglieder und Teilnehmer der BETH-Konferenzen aus fast allen Ländern Europas.

Die 50 Jahre des Conseil/BETH waren unter anderem geprägt von zunehmender Säkularisierung mit abnehmendem Engagement in kirchlichen Organisationen und abnehmender Bereitschaft, sich an deren Kosten zu beteiligen. Viele theologische Fakultäten, Seminare und andere kirchliche Einrichtungen wurden geschlossen oder mit anderen fusioniert, Abteien und Klöster aufgelöst. Mit dem kulturellen Erbe dieser Institutionen, einschließlich der Bibliotheken, wurde nicht immer sehr sorgfältig umgegangen.

1972 steckte die Bibliotheksautomatisierung noch in den Kinderschuhen; heute ist sie unverzichtbar geworden. Außerdem sind Bibliothekskataloge fast alle im World Wide Web zugänglich. Auch sonst ist die Arbeit eines Bibliothekars sehr viel technischer geworden. Bisher unbekannte Begriffe wie Digitalisierung, Metadaten, Datenmanagement und Open Science sind unter theologischen Bibliothekaren alltäglich geworden.

Auch in finanzieller Hinsicht hat sich viel verändert. Einerseits waren und sind Bibliotheken regelmäßig mit Kürzungen konfrontiert. Andererseits sind die Preise für wissenschaftliche Bücher und Zeitschriften – sowohl gedruckt als auch digital – stark gestiegen.

All diese Entwicklungen hatten nicht nur für Bibliotheken, sondern auch für Bibliotheksverbände weitreichende Folgen. Wo Bibliotheken geschlossen wurden, verloren Vereine Mitglieder. Aber wo Grenzen geöffnet wurden, kamen neue Mitglieder hinzu. Finanzielle Einschränkungen stimulieren

Kooperationen, sind auch ein Stimulus für die Open-Science-Bewegung. Neue Techniken führen zu neuen Initiativen, das Internet ermöglicht mehr Zusammenarbeit.

In den Beiträgen dieses Bandes berichten verschiedene Kollegen über die Entwicklungen in ihren Bibliotheken und Verbänden. Für BETH selbst lässt sich sagen, dass sich die oben skizzierten Entwicklungen positiv auf den Verein ausgewirkt haben. Seine Mitgliederzahl hat sich mehr als verdoppelt, er hat sich von einem eher informellen Beratungsgremium zu einem aktiven Verein entwickelt, dessen Konferenzen jedes Jahr mehr Besucher anziehen. Die Notwendigkeit einer grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit wurde immer deutlicher.

Der erste Teil dieses Jubiläumsbandes enthält wissenschaftliche Beiträge zur jüngeren Geschichte theologischer Bibliotheken in ganz Europa.

Es ist keineswegs die Absicht – und auch nicht realistisch –, einen mehr oder weniger umfassenden Überblick über die europäische Landschaft der theologischen Bibliotheken zu geben. Vielmehr vermitteln die verschiedenen Beiträge ein facettenreiches Bild von Bibliotheken in einer begrenzten Anzahl europäischer Länder mit sehr unterschiedlichen historischen und soziopolitischen Hintergründen. Die hier beschriebenen Geschichten der verschiedenen Bibliothekstypen sind repräsentativ für die große Vielfalt der religiösen und kirchlichen Landschaft in Europa im vergangenen Jahrhundert. Dieser Teil des Buches enthält auch mehrere Beiträge über Bibliotheken in Mittel- und Osteuropa, die zeigen, wie sehr sich BETH erweitert hat und wie vielfältig die Geschichte seiner Mitglieder ist. Wir freuen uns besonders, dass unsere Übersicht auch einen Beitrag über eine Bibliothek aus der Ukraine enthält, der einen Eindruck von der außergewöhnlichen Geschichte vermittelt, die Bibliotheken in Ländern des ehemaligen sowjetischen Einflussbereichs durchlaufen haben. Unsere ukrainischen Kolleginnen und Kollegen sind noch nicht formell Mitglieder von BETH, aber wir haben schon seit einiger Zeit herzliche Beziehungen, die eine baldige Mitgliedschaft in Aussicht stellen. Die aktuelle Krisensituation, die durch den russischen Einmarsch in der Ukraine verursacht wurde, macht uns nur noch entschlossener, unsere Zusammenarbeit in Zukunft zu verstärken.

Der zweite Teil des Buches legt besonderes Augenmerk auf den allgemeinen Kontext und die neuen Bedingungen, unter denen theologische Bibliotheken seit einem halben Jahrhundert arbeiten müssen. Natürlich ist die fortschreitende Computerisierung und Automatisierung der Bibliotheksarbeit hier von entscheidender Bedeutung, in einer digitalen Welt, die Herausforderungen stellt, aber vor allem Chancen bietet, um die bedeutende Funktion der theologischen Bibliotheken im 21. Jahrhundert zu verwirklichen. Dies zeigt sich in



einer Reihe von neuen oder erneuerten Werkzeugen, die dem Benutzer heute zur Verfügung stehen. Aber auch die grundlegenden Veränderungen in der Theologie und im kirchlichen Leben haben die europäischen theologischen Bibliothekare dazu veranlasst, ihre Zusammenarbeit und den Austausch von Erfahrungen und Wissen zu verstärken. Dies hat zu grenzüberschreitenden Netzwerken geführt, in denen Bibliothekare aus ganz Europa zunehmend zusammenarbeiten.

Der dritte Teil dieses Buches enthält schließlich kurze historische Übersichten über BETH und seine Mitglieder. Es zeigt sich, dass sich unser Verband im Laufe der Zeit verändert, aber auch, dass er durch den Beitritt von Bibliotheksverbänden aus Mitteleuropa und Skandinavien erweitert worden ist. Daher kann BETH mit Zuversicht und Elan auf weitere 50 Jahre der Zusammenarbeit der theologischen Bibliotheken in ganz Europa blicken.

Ich möchte diese Einführung abschließen, indem ich mich bei allen bedanke, die zur Entstehung dieses Buches beigetragen haben: die Kollegen, die einen Beitrag geschrieben haben; die Übersetzer verschiedener Beiträge und Abstracts; die Mitarbeiter des Brill-Verlages; die Herausgeber und insbesondere der Redaktionsleiter, ohne den dieses Buch nie entstanden wäre.

Geert Harmanny  
BETH Präsident

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