Retiring from Methodist Librarian Post: A Tribute to Ken Rowe's Sterling Era of Leadership

Ken Rowe, the Methodist Librarian, is retiring from the Library at the end of the 2001-02 academic year. He has graced Drew University for thirty-two years. His career is nothing short of remarkable. This special issue of Visions is the Library's salute to a talented and valued colleague.

I first shook Ken's hand twenty-seven years ago when I attended my first annual meeting of the American Theological Library Association on the outskirts of Boston, and we have been friends ever since. Even then, he was an imposing scholar-librarian. While known as a budding scholar of Methodist history, he also had a passion for critical bibliographies in all areas of religious studies. Consequently, he founded the ATLA Bibliography Series, and at that meeting in Massachusetts in 1975, he was proudly showing off the first volume. Last year Ken edited and released the 46th volume in that influential series.

Dr. Kenneth E. Rowe

The scholarship of the Drew faculty is known across the country. But dozens of doctoral students and scholars from around the world come to the Drew campus every year—primarily to mine the Methodist collections that he has amassed here. It was his idea—the dream—that was the catalyst and driving force to attract the archives of the United Methodist Church to campus. When combined with Drew's considerable holdings, it became one of the three great centers for the study of Methodism in the world. Hundreds of dissertations, books, and articles have their origins in these collections.

While Dr. Rowe will continue to teach for a few more years, his retirement from the Library marks the end of a sterling era of leadership. Generations of students and scholars to come will continue to honor him by consulting his publications and exploring the rich resources that he collected.

Andrew D. Scrimgeour
Director, University Library

One of America's Foremost Methodist History Scholars

Kenneth E. Rowe is a consummate librarian, bibliographer, editor, historian, and colleague. All the knowledge, skills, and abilities represented by each of these roles have coalesced to form a career of unusual depth and distinction. Clearly we are dealing with a multi-faceted scholar with an abundance of gifts and talents. It has been said that bibliographers are those who build nests in which others hatch their scholarly progeny. In this regard, Ken has supplied many a scholarly bird with a fine nest in which to hatch his or her offspring.

He has compiled bibliographies over a wide range of subjects including worship and liturgy, women, African Americans and Methodism. The public his work has served ranges from students needing basic bibliographic guidance to doctoral candidates requiring expert consultation in forming their theses and seasoned scholars needing the expertise of one with a comprehensive knowledge of scholarly media.
Having joined the American Theological Library Association in 1968, Ken has served the association with distinction. A highly respected member of the association, he has attended most of its annual conferences where his colleagues have benefitted from his participation in panels, round tables, and discussions. He was a member of its Board of Directors, 1977-1980, and a member of its Preservation Committee, 1991-1992.

He has served the Association as an editor for thirty years. In the late 1960s, a concern arose in the association that traditional religious publishers were abandoning scholarly, academic communication in favor of more lucrative and popular projects. In 1969, Ken was appointed Chair of an ad hoc Committee on Publication which, in 1972, established the ATLA Monograph Series, and under his guidance published 47 titles. Two years later, in 1974, it began publication of the Bibliography Series, which has produced 46 titles. Ken's prudent judgment in evaluating and selecting titles, together with his editing and mentoring skills is verified by the success of both series. Many of the titles have gone into second printings, earning a profit for the publishers, royalties for authors, and commissions for the association. Ken was also instrumental in initiating a program of bibliographic awards to encourage scholarship and production in both series.

In the field of Methodist studies Ken has few peers. Here he has produced many bibliographies, not the least of which is the massive Methodist Union Catalog, which is undoubtedly the largest effort ever made to bring the denominational literature under bibliographic control. His authorship of monographs, chapters of books, and articles clearly establish him as one of America's foremost Methodist historians and scholars. Active in the Methodist Librarians' Fellowship, he has encouraged and promoted scholarly research and publication about many aspects of the church's life and mission.

Saint Jerome, patron of libraries and librarians, must be smiling proudly, like the rest of us, as we rejoice in recognizing all these achievements of Ken, our valued colleague and friend.

Elmer and Betty O'Brien
Retired Librarian, United Theological Seminary (Dayton, Ohio); Retired
Librarian, St. Leonard College (Dayton), respectively

To Kenneth E. Rowe, Librarian, Historiographer, Interpreter

Years ago on the TV comedy, "Laugh-In," Guy Lombardo popped out of a window to say, "When I go, I am taking New Year's with me."

When Ken Rowe retires, he may well take Methodist history with him. When Ken Rowe retires, he may well take Methodist history with him. He has been our movement's librarian, historiographer, interpreter. The most public and well-known of these roles, that of interpreter, he has played in talks, sermons, workshops, lectures, articles, and books — many, many of each. In all these media, he has endeavored to call our attention to the view from the pew and to the importance of our everyday lives as a movement — to Sunday schools, popular hymnody, lay offices, architecture, women's organizations, caucuses, lay assemblies, protest movements, organizational developments, worship, and hospitals.

As historiographer he has pulled together the resources on such lay concerns but also on Wesley, on ethnic and especially Black Methodism, on women's contributions, on liturgical shifts, on you name it. Some of these have been published. Others have been handed out to researchers and classes. The fruit of these historiographical labors can be seen in the many editions of his United Methodist Studies: Basic Bibliographies, where he selects judiciously from the huge quantity of items he could produce on any Methodist topic. His unfinished Methodist Union Catalog also attests to his unparalleled command of our movement and its literature. But of all his roles, that of librarian has Ken played best. Anyone who has done serious work at the Archives Center and briefed Ken on his or her interests knows how Ken will enter in that project, immediately orient the researcher to the relevant literature, and then for the duration of that visit, come dashing in with some artifact, pamphlet or picture that he has unearthed from file or shelf, something that no one else would think of, that gives magic to the project. He refers to the Methodist collection as the "church's attic." If so, it has become a well-ordered attic, one that we all can rummage around in with the best cataloging available. Beyond that ordering that he has done as professional librarian are Ken's imaginative, sympathetic sensibilities and techniques that make it possible for him to find buried within some conference journal or Advocate the text or graphic that opens a new vista on the matter at hand.

Ken, we presume that these roles will continue in some way, the first two especially. But we know that we will miss the dash from office or upstairs that brings some treasure into our research.

Russell E. Richey, Dean
and Professor of Church History
Candler School of Theology
Emory University

A Global Methodist Collection

From its beginnings, the Drew Library has had a significant Methodist collection: first editions of the writings of John Wesley, Methodism's founder, and of Francis Asbury and George Whitefield, early Methodists important in bringing the faith to American shores. But the Methodist experience is not captured solely by such first editions, nor by the extensive collection of Wesley autograph letters which we also hold.

Thanks to Ken Rowe's initiatives and joint efforts with the Archives of the United Methodist Church, the Methodism collections at Drew are the most comprehensive in the world. Ken's contribution has been to expand both the scope and the depth of the holdings to a truly a global collection, strong in records from the worldwide missionary empires of the British and American churches. As a historian, Ken is sensitive to the context of religious experience, so our collections contain works such as Cornwall Politics in the Age of Reform, 1790-1885, and others on politics and social conditions in places where Methodism was strong. More importantly, Ken's broad vision of Methodism is reflected in the collections he has created, in many cases, with the help of friends and donors who share his passion for Methodism and its material history. The friendships make the gifts and the collections possible.
Leading with Creativity, Enthusiasm

It has been a pleasure and a learning experience to have worked with Ken Rowe since 1968. He is a librarian who brings creative enthusiasm to all aspects of his professional work, while also providing enthusiastic creativity in a constantly changing library and scholarly environment.

Ken's creative enthusiasm pervades all his work. He is always ready to adapt new library methods and the latest technological advances to provide wider and better service. The displays and exhibits he has enthusiastically mounted have attracted scholars and patrons alike. But most important is his infectious creative enthusiasm while promoting the Methodist Library to potential donors. William Tieck, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Maser, the Seyfrit family, and John H. Prinster are just a few among many donors who responded to Ken's enthusiasm as he was able to showcase the special role they would play in making the Methodist Library an internationally renowned Methodist resource.

No one who has sat in a meeting with Ken can forget his enthusiastic creativity. His style of brainstorming as a "one man idea exchange" invariably sparks others to think creatively. Ideas come rapidly, and while some have seemed impossible at first to achieve, Ken would also lead the implementation of the idea.

There is no better example of Ken's leadership than his dedication to the purchase and transfer to the Library of the Beckerlegge collection, which prior to acquisition by Drew had been the largest privately owned collection of Methodist materials and significant Wesley letters and memorabilia.

Ken's ideas were also incorporated into the Methodist Library as it became a separate entity within the Methodist Center. He was one of the early advocates for Drew becoming the permanent location for the United Methodist Church Commission on Archives and History. He helped to develop the initial contract between the Commission and the University, thereby making the Methodist Center one of the leading Methodist research institutions in the world. And no one but Ken could have exhibited such enthusiastic creativity in titillating students and visitors with death masks or a mummified thumb. He turned a basic interest in Methodism into a passionate research career for many students who made use of the Methodist Library.

Ken has been a constant in the Library and the profession for more than thirty years. He can be proud of the strong legacy he is leaving, one which will enable those who follow him in the position of Methodist Librarian to have a firm basis on which to grow and create and lead.

Jean Schoenthaler
Associate Director

Definitive Bibliography for United Methodist Studies

Ken Rowe started more projects than just about anyone I know. The difference between Ken and others is that Ken managed to finish nearly all of the important projects he started. Being a good librarian and well-trained church historian, he created bibliographies to help the theological and doctoral students at Drew find the best works to consult on various topics; when colleagues in other libraries began asking for copies, he turned his work into publications, giving us fine bibliographies on Methodist women, Methodist music, and other subjects. He also compiled the definitive United Methodist Studies: Basic Bibliographies, now in its fourth edition, and got seven volumes into a project he titled Methodist Union Catalog, Pre-1976 Imprints (before foundering in the M's on all those Methodist groups).

Ken has also written eight other books and parts of books on Methodism that should be in all theological libraries. He remains the editor of three major series for Scarecrow Press: ATLA Bibliography Series, Studies in Evangelicalism (with Donald W. Dayton), and Drew University Studies in Liturgy (with Robin A. Leaver).

So, in the delightful phrase of Albert Outler, Ken Rowe has "committed print." But just as importantly, in the field of Methodist librarianship, he has been a committed colleague, co-conspirator, leader, mentor, and friend to me and to many others. We all wish him well!

Roger L. Loyd, Director
Duke University Divinity School Library

Passionate Collector Inspires Students and Scholars

Ken is very passionate about the Methodist Collection. He is a gracious host with visiting scholars, and his enthusiasm rubs off when showing them "his" collection.

Keeping up with Ken's vitality is a challenge. He also enjoys the unique and macabre, so one can imagine how he presents the Whitefield thumb and John Wesley death mask to a captivated audience. Students often comment that his sense of humor – as when he calls Francis Asbury the "Chicken in the Attic" – does much to enliven the study of Methodist history.

In the early nineties, Ken was honored by the Graduate Student Association. They gave him a standing ovation. At hat time, a group of students presented Ken with a mediaeval-looking medal which he wore with pride at every occasion, as if he had been knighted. He will be missed by all at the Methodist Center.

Jocelyne Rubinetti
Methodist Library Associate
A Key Voice in Methodist Archives and History Center

For more than thirty years Kenneth E. Rowe has served as the Methodist Librarian at Drew University. During that time he has earned the distinction of knowing more about American Methodist history and bibliography than anyone we know.

Ken has worked closely with the staff of the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church for the past twenty years after they moved into the newly constructed Archives and History Center in June 1982. He was one of the key voices in bringing the Center from dream to reality on the Drew campus. We cannot imagine a more knowledgeable and accommodating colleague.

As Methodist Librarian, Ken has built one of the world's premier collections of Methodist books and periodicals. He has served as mentor to hundreds, if not thousands, of seminarians, graduate students, and researchers who have mined the riches of the Methodist collections under his supervision. Ken has welcomed researchers from across the country and from countless other nations, and has promptly responded to inquiries about denominational history, doctrine, and polity. On behalf of the General Commission on Archives and History and its staff, we express our gratitude to Ken Rowe, a superb scholar, librarian, teacher, and friend. We wish him good health and much happiness!

Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.
General Secretary
General Commission on Archives and History
The United Methodist Church

Methodist Archives and History Center under construction, 1981-82.
Photo: Drew University Archives

Kenneth E. Rowe: A Bibliography

Compiled by Suzanne Selinger
Theological Librarian

Ken Rowe is known, valued, and relied upon everywhere in the world community of Methodist scholars and everywhere among religion bibliographers. He published his first bibliographies while a graduate student in church history at Drew and has continued to write and compile—seemingly without respite—both historical and bibliographic works, each strand richly informing the other.

Several characteristics stand out. Ken's publications on American Methodism and its literature are multitudinous. Within this field he has long been interested in liturgy and worship. In two subject areas he has been ahead of the curve. His Methodist Women: A Guide to the Literature (1980) was recognized by one of its successors as the first comprehensive bibliography on women in the Wesleyan tradition.1 He also pioneered in 1984 with his Black Methodists: An Introductory Guide to the Literature.

Most interesting to me is the collaborative nature of his work. This scholar plays well with others. In our classes we increasingly assign group projects to students, but rarely practice collaboration in our own research and writing. Dr. Rowe is entering his third decade of collaborative practice.

He has also functioned as inciter and facilitator of the work of others. Ken Rowe is the founder and long-time editor, or co-editor, of one series in theological bibliography--the ATLA Bibliography Series--and three monograph series: the ATLA Monograph Series, Studies in Evangelicalism, and Drew University Studies in Liturgy.

It seems appropriate to end this bibliography with a list of Drew Ph.D. dissertations that Ken has directed.2 His Doktorvater record is long, and, further, the subjects of the dissertations mirror the collection that he has so painstakingly, persistently, and lovingly assembled.

1 Susan M. Eltscher, Women in the Wesleyan and United Methodist Traditions: A Bibliography (Madison, N.J.: General Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church, 1992) "Introduction"

2 Linda Blank of the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies provided essential help in compiling this Ph.D. title list. Included are titles from the early 1980s onward.
Books


Books Edited


Contributions to Collected Works


"Nostalgia and Newness, a Bicentennial Sermon." It All Started in Albany. 13-16.


"Counting the Converts: Progress Reports as Church History." Rethinking Methodist History. (See above, Books Edited.) 11-17.


Articles


"Sing With the Spirit: Methodist Hymnals through the Years," Interpreter, 34:4 (May-June 1990), 14-16.


Reviews


**Series Editor**

*ATLA Monograph Series. 47 titles. Metuchen, N.J. /Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1972-96:*


Byrne, Donald E. *No Foot of Land: Folklore of American Methodist Itinerants*, Foreword by Stuart C. Henry. 1975.

Fleischner, Eva. *Judaism in German Christian Theology since 1945: Christianity and Israel Considered in Terms of Mission*, 1975.


ATLA Bibliography Series. 46 titles. Metuchen, N.J./Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1974-98:


Bonk, Jon. *An Annotated and Classified Bibliography of English Literature Pertaining to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, 1984.


Thompson, Bard (General Editor; in cooperation with the Liturgical Faculty of New Jersey and New York). *A Bibliography of Christian Worship*, 1988.


Dayton, Donald W. *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism; Foreword by Martin E. Marty*, 1987.


Drew University Studies in Liturgy, with Robin Leaver. 9 titles. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1995-:


Ph.D. Dissertations, 1983-2001(Available through University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor.)


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Dr. Andrew D. Scrimgeour, Director
Drew University Library, Madison, NJ 07940
(973) 408-3322 ascrimge@drew.edu

EDITOR: Anna S. Magnell

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