

**THE THEOLOGY COLLECTIONS OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA**

**A Response to a Call for Proposals  
SOLINET/ASERL Cooperative Preservation Microfilming Project 4**

# **THE THEOLOGY COLLECTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA**

## **A Response to a Call for Proposals SOLINET/ASERL Cooperative Preservation Microfilming Project 4**

Prepared by Erich Kesse, Chair, Preservation Department

### **SUMMARY**

The University of Florida proposes that 5,000 theological texts in pamphlet and small monographs, including essays, hymnals, tracts, sermons, and pedagogical works, be microfilmed for preservation.

### **COLLECTION DESCRIPTION IN BRIEF**

The theology collections at the University of Florida supplement those of other libraries in the Southeast, the United States in general, and the United Kingdom. In two principal and several smaller collections, the theology collections have a unique strength. While the collections are strong in Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish theology, they are particularly strong in theological traditions which have their roots in English and Scottish Protestantism. The collections reflect the fracture and schism of these traditions beginning with the start of the 17th century and reflect important influences on mainline American religious traditions. In this area, the collections contain more than 15,000 items of representative material. The collections clearly depict a populist rather than official theology and, therefore, represent practical rather than doctrinal teachings.

This proposal targets the two larger collections: the Kohler Victorian Theology Collection and the Baldwin Library of American and British Historic Children's Literature's collection of religious tracts for children. Both collections include materials that document the growth and diversity of mainline Protestant demoninations of the United Kingdom and the United States during the 18th and early 19th centuries. They include Wesleyan, Presbyterian, and Methodist publications -- some authored by John and Charles Wesley -- and Anglican and Episcopal publications not held elsewhere and not previously microfilmed. Both supplement previous preservation efforts of American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and SOLINET/ASERL project members, including Emory University and the University of the South.

The Kohler Victorian Theology Collection is comprised of more than 7,600 essays, sermons and tracts. Imprints originate entirely from the United Kingdom. Twenty-six percent of the collection is Scottish and, in the main, representative of Wesleyan and Presbyterian traditions. The remaining seventy-four percent is English and representative of Anglican,

primarily "low-church," traditions. The collection is not widely known beyond the University of Florida, the result of neglected cataloging rather than disinterest. Though it has been used by the university's theology faculty and, less frequently, by scholars of British social history, it has been most frequently used by faculty and students researching the development of oratory and rhetoric.

The Baldwin Library is known as one of the best libraries of 18th- and 19th-century English-language juvenilia in the world and its collection of religious tracts comprises of more than 6,200 chapbooks and lessons. Seventy percent of the collection is American and reflects the diversity of Christian religious tradition in the United States. The remaining thirty percent is British, either English or Scottish. Again because of neglected cataloging, however, it is not widely known in general academic circles.

The Baldwin Library tracts present complex concepts, distilling the theology manifest in the Kohler Victorian Theology Collection to a form of catechism or pedagogic discourse on moral fiber spun from the tenets of main-line Protestant faith. Publications issued by the American Baptist Publication Society, Christian Tract Society, Church of England and Sunday School Institute, Office of the Christian Register, Religious Tract Society, Southern Methodist Publishing House, and Sunday School Union among others develop practical codes for living. As such, their value rests as much in sociological studies as in theology. The collection has been used by scholars of American and British social history to explore cultural attitudes and social temperaments. The library's religious materials are especially important insofar as they have been used to inform particular analyses of the library's fiction holdings and to establish the overall relevance of religion within the social fabric.

## **COLLECTION PROFILE**

### **TYPE OF COLLECTION**

Theology materials from the Department of Special Collections. Each of the target collections is non-circulating.

### **SUBJECT(S)**

Religion; Theology (representing: Anglicanism and Episcopalianism; Wesleyanism, Presbyterianism and Methodism); Hymns and Hymnals; and Sermons.

### **CLASSIFICATION**

**Dewey Decimal Classification:** 248 through 299; bulk, 280-290.

**Library of Congress Classification:** BF through BL; bulk, BL.

### **FORMAT**

Printed tracts in pamphlet (92%), and monographs (8%).

## **IMPRINT**

**Dates:** Bulk 1830-1900;

**Place:** England, Scotland and U.S.A.

- **KOHLER VICTORIAN THEOLOGY COLLECTION**

**Dates:** 1790-1900;

**Place:** England (73.6%) and Scotland (26.4%).

- **BALDWIN LIBRARY RELIGIOUS TRACTS FOR CHILDREN**

**Dates:** 1790-1920;

**Place:** England (28.8%), Scotland (0.8%) and U.S.A. (70.4%)

## **BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL (Current)**

Degree of bibliographic control currently varies from and within collections. Few titles have been cataloged on-line.

- **KOHLER VICTORIAN THEOLOGY COLLECTION**

Provisional paper and electronic records containing basic description and dated name authority only.

- **BALDWIN LIBRARY RELIGIOUS TRACTS FOR CHILDREN**

Provisional paper records with some OCLC I-Level records.

The University of Florida proposes to supply available cataloging as follows:

- **KOHLER VICTORIAN THEOLOGY COLLECTION**

Print-out or copy of provisional cataloging augmented with full descriptive bibliographic and physical information together with a minimum of one subject heading and additional, more specific headings as apparent or necessary.

- **BALDWIN LIBRARY RELIGIOUS TRACTS FOR CHILDREN**

Print-out of NOTIS I-Level records, with additional form, genre and publisher tracings.

## **JUSTIFICATION FOR PRESERVATION**

The theology collections are unique and endangered primary resources documenting the growth of main-line Anglo-American Protestant traditions throughout the 18th- and early 19th-centuries. Their use supports and informs historical, literary, and social studies for their place and time. Texts in the collections do not duplicate resources elsewhere and have not been made widely available for research because there has been limited cataloging and because they are in poor condition. Preservation microfilming and associated OCLC cataloging would ensure that these texts outlive the life of their current paper medium and are accessible for research at the University of Florida and beyond.

## AVAILABILITY OF DESCRIPTION IN THE MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATABASES

A large portion, 75.4%, of the theology collections are not represented in any of the major bibliographic databases. No single institution holds a majority of titles present in these databases.

- **KOHLER VICTORIAN THEOLOGY COLLECTION**

83.2% of titles were not found outside of the University of Florida's holdings. 23% of Scottish imprints were found together with 16.3% of English imprints. No imprints lacking place of publication were found. Cataloging appears not to have concentrated on any particular date or time span.

- **BALDWIN LIBRARY RELIGIOUS TRACTS FOR CHILDREN**

48% of titles were not found outside of the University of Florida's holdings. 54.5% of U.S.A. imprints were found together with 42.2% of English imprints. No Scottish imprints or imprints lacking place of publication were found. Cataloging appears not to have concentrated on any particular date or time span.

## CONDITION OF THE COLLECTION

Embrittlement, as indicated by flex testing, was the sole determinant of the condition of the theology collections as candidates for preservation microfilming. A flex test, rather than the "standard" double fold test used in most library studies of embrittlement as a surrogate for the MIT fold tester, was employed because non-destructive methods were required for these Department of Special Collections materials. Considered more subjective than the double fold test, flex testing requires the surveyor to bend the corner, which otherwise would have been folded, at 45<sup>0</sup> to either edge of the book-paper, over the curve of a pencil, observing stress lines that develop. Because paper grain usually runs long or short, i.e., up and down or across the page, stress lines that develop along the 45<sup>0</sup> angle can be associated with embrittlement. The degree of embrittlement can be estimated by the number and severity of stress lines.

Only trained staff with extensive double fold testing experience conduct flex testing. The University of Florida employed a single flex tester to assure consistency of results. This individual regularly conducts dual flex and double fold testing on circulating materials to assure confidence in the results. Dual testing establishes flex test measurements within one unit of double fold test measurements. Flex testing usually *underestimates* embrittlement.

To facilitate comparison of our results with those performed by other institutions, we report embrittlement as items which score the estimated equivalent of three double folds. Our results have not been modified to compensate for any difference between flex and double fold measurement.

The University of Florida's theology collections are significantly embrittled. Fully 65.6% of these collections, as opposed to 20% of the university's general holdings, is embrittled.

- **KOHLER VICTORIAN THEOLOGY COLLECTION**

60% of the collection is embrittled; i.e., 42.9% of imprints lacking place of publication, 57.6% of English imprints, and 73% of Scottish imprints.

- **BALDWIN LIBRARY RELIGIOUS TRACTS FOR CHILDREN**

71.2% of the collection is embrittled, compared to a rate of 98% embrittlement in the Baldwin Library as a whole; i.e., 23.1% of English and Scottish imprints and 93.3% of U.S.A. imprints.

#### **REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION : DATE PARAMETERS**

The university **requests consideration** for inclusion of imprints dating back to 1790. Embrittlement of all imprints extends beyond normal preservation microfilming date parameters, i.e., 1850-1900, back through the 1790s. We surmise that widely varied North American climates, combined with the poor paper quality, inferior storage, and ill use heretofore associated with juvenilia led to the distressed conditions noted above. While embrittlement is not as severe for imprints of English and Scottish origin as it is for those of American origin, incidence of embrittlement per decade regardless of origin is more or less consistently even from 1790 on.

#### **AWARENESS OF OTHER FILMING PROJECTS**

Significant microfilming of theological texts has been completed by several institutions, principally by ATLA in microfiche, and in the southeastern United States by Emory University and the University of the South. The number of institutions involved in the collective effort is countless and includes small theological as well as large national libraries. Many of the African materials filmed for the University of Florida under the auspices of the SOLINET/ASERL Cooperative Preservation Microfilming Projects were missionary tracts. The bulk of all theological texts in microform have been produced to preservation standard. The wealth of theological texts is such that overlap between other preservation microfilming projects and that proposed by the University of Florida appears to be insignificant.

Filming also continues NEH-funded Research Libraries Group Great Collections Microfilming Project IV work in the Baldwin Library. The university completed rarebook cataloging and preservation microfilming of 250 18th and 19th century American and British editions and variants of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

#### **AVAILABILITY IN REPRINT, MICROFORM, and ELECTRONIC FORMATS**

##### **REPRINT**

- Bibliographic search of the random samples found no reprints.
- Theological texts, particularly sermons, tracts and pedagogical materials, are used mainly as primary sources. Unlike secondary sources, primary sources are more likely to be reformatted for preservation rather than reprinted for distribution.

##### **MICROFORM**

- Bibliographic search of the random samples found few microform versions, less than 4% overall. The majority of microforms were 35 mm not produced, in principal, by any single institution or corporate body. The minority were microfiche produced as a result of ATLA filming projects.
- **KOHLER VICTORIAN THEOLOGY COLLECTION**

Microform availability set at a rate of 0.8%, i.e., 0% of publications without imprint, 0% Scottish imprints, and 1.1% of English imprints.

Microfilmed sample was too small to characterize filming by date of imprint.

- **BALDWIN LIBRARY RELIGIOUS TRACTS FOR CHILDREN**

Microform availability set at a rate of 5.7%; i.e., 0% of publications without imprint, 0% of Scottish and English imprints, and 5.7% of U.S.A. imprints.

Microfilmed titles date from the 1860s and 1880s, periods in U.S.A. history identified with the expansion of the railroads, the west-ward movement of centers of population and known as "the Great Expansion." Filming activity could not be associated with other periods.

#### **ELECTRONIC FORMATS**

- Bibliographic search of the random samples found no electronic versions.

### **ESTIMATE OF PRESERVATION NEED**

**TOTAL COLLECTION:** 5,000 items, as outlined below. 3,500 items from the Kohler Victorian Theology COLLECTION 1,500 items from the Baldwin Library.

Note that we have not corrected for specific imprint date exclusion; we have requested special date consideration, cf, "Condition of Collection," above. Even if declined collection size is large enough as not to have impact upon the number of items we request be filmed.

Note, also, that we have not corrected for selection; items in target collections were acquired with specific intent and remain important. Collection management review is proposed as a means of culling the best materials from the collections given limits on the university's capacity to prepare cataloging for this project.

- **KOHLER VICTORIAN THEOLOGY COLLECTION**

- Base collection size: 7,682 items with provisional cataloging.
- Correction for availability (0.8%): 7,620 items eligible.
- Correction for non-embrittled items (40%): 4,572 items eligible.
- Adjustment for capacity to prepare items: 3,500 items targeted.

- **BALDWIN LIBRARY RELIGIOUS TRACTS FOR CHILDREN**

- Base collection size: 6,250 items with cataloging.
- Correction for availability (5.7%): 5,893 items eligible.
- Correction for non-embrittled items (28.8%): 4,195 items eligible.
- Adjustment for capacity to prepare items: 1,500 items targeted.

## **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

### **COLLECTION MANAGEMENT**

- Blake Landor, Collection Manager for Classics, Philosophy, and Theology (5% FTE)

### **PRESERVATION**

- Erich Kesse, Chair, Preservation Department. [Local project management] (2% FTE)
- Bob Harrell, Head, Reprographics Unit [Quality control] (5% FTE)
- Nelda Schwartz, Coordinator, Brittle Books Program [Preparation] (10% FTE)

### **RESOURCE SERVICES**

- Elaine Yontz, Cataloging [Bibliographic control] (5% FTE)

### **SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

- Jeffrey Barr, Rare Books Librarian [Kohler Collection liaison] (2% FTE)
- Rita Smith, Baldwin Librarian [Baldwin Library cataloger] (5% FTE)

## **COORDINATED PROJECT INFORMATION**

The University of Florida does not propose a coordinated project. The work proposed builds on work already or soon to be completed through other SOLINET/ASERL Cooperative Preservation Microfilming Projects; cf, "Awareness of other filming projects," above. The university's collections, otherwise, appear to be distinct from similar collections in the region.

## **CONTINUATION OF PREVIOUS PROJECT**

The University of Florida's proposal represents a new project, comparable to but distinct from similar previous SOLINET/ASERL projects.

## **SAMPLE**

Statistical information given in this proposal was drawn at random from both the Kohler Victorian Theology Collection and the Baldwin Libraries's religious tracts. A total of 265 volumes were sampled, including 125 from the Kohler Victorian Theology Collection and 140 from the Baldwin Library. Surveys of physical condition and bibliographic availability were complete for all volumes sampled.

Physical condition surveys were based on the Research Libraries Group's *Preservation Needs Assessment Program* tool. Physical condition survey of Baldwin Library titles also examined structural evidence using models established by the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin. Again, only evidence of embrittlement was reported in this proposal.

Bibliographic searches were conducted in the Florida Center for Library Automation (FCLA) database of Florida's ten State University System libraries, OCLC and RLIN, as well as *Books in Print* and micropublisher's catalogs.