

Report from the library project at Umphumulo theological seminary

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We spent two weeks at Umphumulo, from 22 February till 14 March 2024.

When we arrived the books from the former LTI library were present, but there was no system within the more than 900 boxes, containing library books, journals, archival material and donations. The library database was missing, and with no physical record of the library collection the process was complicated. But with experience from other theological libraries, indications from the Metrofile-file, and good help from the students, we managed to organise the collection.

There were 13 new shelves (190 cm) and 26 old shelves (220 cm). The old shelves had to be fixed, and that was done with the help of students and volunteers (Zuma).



Description of the library

1. The "entrance room"
2. The "office" (to the left of the entrance room)
3. The "first hall" to the right of the entrance room
4. The "second hall" following the first hall
5. The "reading room" following the second hall (the former door today closed with a wall)

Organisation of the library

The office

This room contains the journals, archival material, donations, and doubles, all of this in boxes. This room might be organised with shelves to host the journals which now fills up 90 boxes. Three or four shelves will suffice, but we suggest that this work is not prioritized now but dealt with at a later stage.

The archival material takes up some 20 boxes. What to do with the archival material is a question that the ELCSA-leadership has to decide on.

The donations consist of books within theology, psychology, social sciences and also fiction. This material had to be repacked for a better storage. The content is not organised thematically, but the titles are visible when a box is opened.

The library will need a storage room also in the future, for doubles, donations etc, and that might be this room.

The entrance room

The entrance room could serve as a combination of office for the librarian and check out area. Here it is possible to overlook the students coming and going, and it is a good place to leave bags etc and we suggest that this entrance is the only one to be used to access the library.

We also suggest to install four shelves in the entrance room to make space for 280-289 - Denominations (20 boxes) and 290-299 – Religions (19 boxes).

As for now the app. 100 boxes containing 260-269 – Social Theology takes up the whole room. These are to be placed on shelves in the second hall.

The first hall

The hall contains 000-099 - General Literature; 100-199 - Philosophy and Psychology; 200-215 – Religion; 220-229 - Biblical disciplines; 000-999 - Reference Works; 400-499 – Language; and 800-820 - Literature. This room is mainly finished, but if needed there is space to add more one-sided shelves.

The second hall

Starting on the left-hand side, this room holds 230-239 - Systematic Theology, followed by 240-249 - Moral and Devotional Theology and 250-259 - Practical Theology. We have also placed a special collection on Christian Education after practical theology (these books have a different classification). 270-279 - Church History is placed on the shelves in the middle of the room.

After 250-259 - Practical Theology and Christian Education, the plan is to continue with 260-269 - Christian Social and ecclesiastical theology when new shelves arrive.

As for now four shelves have one side empty (23 shelf meters). Standing at the entrance, six new shelves should be put up on the right-hand side. Four shelves in a row along the windows

(mirroring the other side) and then two shelves next to these four. This will give 83 shelf meters to host 260-269. Some doubles might have to be removed to get enough space.

19 boxes of 290-299 – Religions are now stored in this room but might be placed in the entrance room. 49 boxes of 300-399 – Social Sciences, are also stored in this room. These might be placed in the reading room.

The reading room

As per now there are 20 boxes on 280-289 - Denominations which might be placed in the entrance room when new shelves arrive. There are also 50 boxes containing 900-999 - History and Geography. In addition to this, 11 boxes on 820-899 – Literature, 1 box on 500 – Natural Sciences, 5 boxes on 600 – Applied Sciences, and, 2 boxes on 700-799 – Arts.

We suggest that the use of this room is not prioritised for now, but that time, needs and reflection will guide you into finding its right use. As per now there is no space planned for (the many interesting) books within 300-399 - Social Sciences and 900-999 – History and Geography. The reading room might host these fields, but you should not rush this decision.

Priorities

1. Buy 10 new shelves now. Place four in the entrance room and six in the second hall. With this addition all the theological literature can be shelved. Find a both practical and welcoming way to combine shelves and librarian's desk in the entrance hall.
2. If you want to shelve the journals in the office, add four shelves. Place them so that you leave practical space for storage of other material.
3. In due time, decide how to want to use the reading room. This might be a mix of shelves containing books within social sciences and history and reading spaces. Or, if you see that you need this room for other use, the collection in the two halls has to be reduced to make space for these other fields. Other solution is that the whole setup has to change to make room for more shelves.



Concluding remarks

Before leaving we had a good talk with Nicolas. And it was a great joy to end our visit and work with handing over the computers from VID and then give the students a guided tour in their new library. We hope that they feel that they have been part of the work and that the library will be a blessing for teachers, students, and pastors in the years to come.