The church library has the awesome responsibility to serve as steward of media resources that strengthen and support the total church ministry.

The library is an efficient system for conserving, storing, protecting, circulating, and promoting resources for the church and community.

The church library becomes a support ministry of the church.

It has the ability to enhance pastoral counseling, Bible study, discipleship, missions education, worship, fellowship, family relations, personal development, evangelism, ministry, and recreation.

Specifically, it meets the needs of people: leaders, teachers, ministers, parents, adults, youth, children, and preschoolers - all ages in various situations.

The church library always seeks to provide wholesome and biblically-based resources to encourage and enrich the growth of God’s people on the bold mission of Christian life and service.
**AFFIRM CHURCH LIBRARY MINISTRY**

Whether beginning a new library or reviving a previous one, the congregation should affirm the ministry of the church library. Plan with church leadership to have a vote of confidence by the congregation for the new library ministry. This is the time to build an understanding of the vision and purpose of the library. With affirmation and commitment on the part of the church membership, the Church Library Ministry [CLM] will undergird and function alongside the purpose and mission of the total church ministry.

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**EMPHASIZE QUALITY MORE THAN QUANTITY IN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT**

Kinds of media include printed materials such as books, brochures, tracts, teaching pictures, periodicals, maps, and teaching literature. Audiovisuals include audio and videocassettes, compact discs, DVDs, computer software, and internet use for study and recreation. Audiovisual equipment such as projectors, monitors, audio and videocassette recorders, computers, and other hardware can be assigned to the library for maintenance and dispatch.

When starting a new work, care must be given to determine what is kept from donations and items already on hand. Time and the cost to process poor quality items is wasted. Wise selection of quality materials appropriate for your church is vital. Keep and promote only the best of materials for the library users.

In advance of receiving donations, write a selection and gift policy that establishes guidelines for choosing or accepting media materials. The church should approve the policy so that it becomes the church’s guidelines rather than the opinion of a few persons. Copies should be available for distribution. An example of a basic Selection and Gift policy follows:

**SELECTION AND GIFT POLICY**

In order for the church library to support the total program and mission of the church fellowship, all materials must be of the best quality and benefit for members and leaders. The church membership and the library staff have affirmed the following selection guidelines:

1. All printed and audiovisual titles and other materials are subject to approval by the library staff and church leadership as necessary.
2. Content of printed and audiovisual media should be accurate in facts, scripture interpretation, and doctrine.
3. Titles related to religious groups and their beliefs should be objective in content.
4. Media should be constructive in influence, morally sound, and free from racial and religious prejudice, political bias, social injustice, and other evidences of unchristian attitudes and actions.
5. Media should be of high literary and technical quality and reflect sound learning methods.
6. Gifts of equipment and furnishings are subject to approval by the library staff and church leadership as necessary.
7. Gifts to the church library are encouraged, with money preferred. The giver, with the staff, may determine specifics regarding the choice of the gift.

The above example can be customized to a particular church library. It can address media already on hand, new purchases, new or used donations, or gifts given from a needs list or media fair. Printed, projected, and computerized materials may be addressed separately within the same policy. Addressing media selection issues early in the development provides a positive, clear direction in developing an exceptional, focused, theologically appropriate, and high-quality church library collection.

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**ELECT A NON-ROTATING TEAM**

It is extremely difficult for one person to attempt to create a library ministry alone. The ideal is to elect a team leader (or director) and an assistant. Additional team members to do specific tasks may be added as the ministry develops. Because of the technical training required, it is vital to elect a non-rotating team of library workers. Enlist persons with a wide variety of talents and personalities and then train them to do the many kinds of tasks needed for library ministry.
DEVELOP A MISSION STATEMENT TELLING WHO DOES WHAT, FOR WHOM, AND WHY

A descriptive mission statement will guide the staff in achieving the goals of the library ministry. It will also communicate what the church library seeks to do for the congregation and community. Use the mission statement of the church and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 as a guide for preparation. A mission statement will help keep in focus the ideals of reaching the lost, developing disciples, enabling ministry, encouraging fellowship, and enhancing worship.

ORGANIZE MEDIA FOR EASY ACCESS

The two organizational systems recommended for church libraries are the Sears List of Subject Headings and The Dewey Decimal Classification System. These two systems work together to provide a method of storage and easy retrieval of media. They are the most widely used systems adaptable for all sizes of collections. The Sears and Dewey systems provide simple and adequate means for helping library users find the media they need for study and enrichment.

Joining with other technical tasks of accessioning, labeling, storing, and shelving, these systems will complete the preparation of media for easy resource retrieval.

DEVELOP A BUDGET

A budget for the church library must be planned, appropriately presented to the church and, when approved, implemented by the church library staff as good stewards. An itemized budget may include proposed expenditures for print and audiovisual media, media processing supplies, promotion supplies, as well as purchase and maintenance of furnishings and equipment. Funds should also be included to send the library staff to church library conferences and for the purchase of training materials. An itemized budget proposal should, as a minimum, include supplies and materials for processing media.

In addition to the budget, a major source of money will come as gifts to the church and designated for use in the library. The most common designations are memorial and “in honor of” gifts to purchase new media items, equipment, and furnishings. These gifts should be treated as an addition to the budget, not as a part of it. Designated gifts are vital to the growth of church libraries.

Good records and reports to the church will be the key to building future budgets. Financial records, and all other records and procedures, may be kept in a church library desk book or procedures manual. Consider beginning these kinds of items for historical information, planning in the present, and projecting for the future. Good record keeping is part of the stewardship of the library ministry.

COMPUTERIZE FROM THE BEGINNING

Computerization from the beginning will significantly reduce the time required to process media. One benefit in automating now can eliminate the expense of a card catalog versus that of a computer catalog. It can also open up a world of information and helps on the internet. Computer hardware and library software are within reach of most churches. Donations of adequate computers are usually realized just by asking for them. Automating now will eliminate duplication of work later.

CIRCULATE MEDIA

Policies will guide the times the library is open and the length of time media can be borrowed. The decision whether fines will be initiated and past-due reminders are sent must be included in the circulation policy. Individuals or families will fill out a user information card, which includes names, address, and phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and interests. Consider extending an invitation to the community and other persons outside the church membership to use the library. Written policies help to prevent misunderstandings about the rules of circulation.
PROVIDE SPACE AND FURNISHINGS

It is best to start with a separate room if one is available. Location is one of the keys to a successful church library. Look for a location with high traffic flow, where people gather, and is easily accessible. Create an ambiance of warmth and usability to draw people into the library.

If a room is not available, consider using a table, a mobile shelving unit, or a book cart in a foyer or hallway. An option is to share a classroom and use portable shelving. Every library ministry can take media to the people in a box or a basket. Great service leads to promotion!

ADD SERVICES THAT MEET NEEDS

The basic service of the library is to provide easy access to appropriate media. As personnel and resources are available, other services can be added, such as story time for children, media for people with special needs, media clubs, book reviews, video previews, sermon audiovisuals, computer activities and resources, listening centers, library skills classes, and special support activities for age-group ministries. First, it is important to do the basic service well. Other services will easily follow as persons are discovered with a passion for those ministries.

PROMOTE TO ESTABLISH A PRESENCE

The library and its resources must be promoted! Use every method possible to inform the people of the library in general and of media items in particular. Promotion ideas can be electronic, visual, verbal, printed, or activities. Each of these methods offers an abundance of creative promotion opportunities.

Avoid waiting until everything is complete to begin checking out media. Begin circulation as soon as media processing has begun. This will generate excitement and become a great promotional tool as the word is shared that the library is open. Use themes such as, “Under Construction” or “Help Us Grow.” Let the people feel they are part of the new library.

ASK FOR HELP!

Inquire within the association of churches in your area for established church libraries. North Carolina church librarians continue to build a network of experienced librarians to assist neighboring churches in their Association or Region. A wealth of information and links for CLM is available on the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina website: www.churchlibraryministries.org/churchlibrary. Training events and resources are listed on this site. Valuable information and frequently asked questions are accessible as well as contact information for individuals prepared to share years of church library knowledge and experience. All this and more is provided for your convenience and reference.

A quality Church Library Workshop, sponsored by the BSCNC is held annually. For more information, write or call Congregational Services / Church Library Ministry, BSCNC, PO Box 1107, Cary, NC 27512-1107. Phone: (800) 395-5102.

The Church Library Ministry Program of LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville gives information on products and training events at www.lifeway.com/churchlibrary. You will also find a supply of archived articles related to church library ministry as well as a free e-newsletter for church librarians.

TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME

Pray and plan. Plan and pray. A quality library does involve a commitment of patience, teachability, and hard work. A meaningful ministry can develop if created step by step. Remember the purpose is to provide an active resource center to guide people in the church and the surrounding community to grow in the knowledge and lifestyle of Christ. The Church Library Ministry also supports the ministerial staff and leadership by providing quality resources and services to strengthen the mission goals of the church. This is done with the help of a committed library staff/team. Imagine what can happen... Just start!
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For biblical solutions for your church library ministry go to www.lifeway.com/churchlibrary

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Lifeway offers a 20% discount to libraries on circulating items only. To set up an account to receive the discount, call (800) 233-1123.

Resources Available:
Church Library Ministry Information Service, ISBN: 0805459065
A Classification System for Church Libraries, Revised, ISBN: 0633199702

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