

## Description of Materials in the Area of New Testament Studies

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### Introduction

This article deals with the description of materials in the area of New Testament Studies (NT) in regard to their subject content and form. The focus is on collection development of print materials in the academic library. A theoretical approach, with the goal of user friendliness, to the description of NT materials is tentatively proposed. The orientation and terminology may be relevant to other disciplines as well.

There are numerous facets to the information needs of library patrons. A college freshman taking an introductory course on the Gospels requires: 1) material having to do with the Gospels: 2) the text in English: 3) an explanation of the text: and 4) an introduction to the Gospels in a manner which is not beyond his/her comprehension. Collection development for the academic library should be oriented towards the needs of this and other patrons. Broadus sums it up: "The first rule in selection is that libraries exist for patrons, not for librarians."<sup>1</sup>

This article's goal is to propose an approach that keeps patron needs foremost. This involves the

identification and definition of a set of terms which will describe New Testament materials vis-a-vis the needs of the patron. However, the selection process must also consider several other factors. Atkinson argues for three "contexts of resolution" in the collection development process.<sup>2</sup> The "communal" context concerns the clients and their needs. The "archival" context is concerned with the library's present collection. The "thematic" context deals with what materials exist on the subject. The description proposed here is oriented towards the communal context. The proposed terminology which first describes the needs of patrons can then also be applied to the archival and thematic contexts.

Any material can be described at several levels. Here we are concerned with the materials' subject and form—two levels which each contain two dimensions. This paper will be concerned with the analysis and synthesis of each dimension. It is not concerned with other levels of description, such as bibliographical description, the logic/argumentation structure, or the theological perspective.

## Analysis of Dimensions

The first level of description concerns the materials' subject. This level can be characterized along two dimensions: the first dealing with the materials' hierarchical scope, the second with the type of material.

## Hierarchical Scope

The hierarchical scope is concerned with the materials' breadth. Within the overall scope of the NT, material can take a more general or more specific focus. These scopes are hierarchical because a more specific scope is subsumed under a more general scope and vice versa. The four hierarchical scopes which we will deal with are: 1) the Bible as a whole; 2) the NT as a whole; 3) a division of the NT; and 4) an individual book of the NT.

An item which has the hierarchical scope of Bible includes the entire Bible within its range. The NT and Old Testament will be covered, but such material may have some important information about an individual book as well. However, the hierarchical scope remains the Bible as a whole. An item with the scope of NT will limit its range to the New Testament. There are three divisions of the NT: 1) the Gospels; 2) the letters of Paul; and 3) the other writings. A material with the Gospels scope will have the Gospels as its subject range. The Gospels division contains the individual books Matthew through Acts—a sum of five individual books. (Technically, Acts is not a Gospel, but it is inextricably connected.) The letters of Paul division contains the books Romans through Philemon—a sum of ten individual books. An example of the individual book scope is an item which deals

with Matthew.

This description of hierarchical scope involves the use of a set of terms to which Dewey Decimal Classification notation corresponds.<sup>3</sup> The scope of the Bible is 220; NT is 225; Gospels is 226; and Matthew is 226.2. This numeric notation, of course, is not oriented towards patrons.

## Type of Material

The second dimension involved in describing the subject deals with the types of material. There are four: 1) primary; 2) secondary; 3) adjacent; and 4) reference. In regards to the NT, primary materials are texts of the NT as a whole or parts thereof. The primary material par excellence is the Koine Greek version. However, primary materials also consist of the English NT—in its multitude of versions. Concordances will also be considered primary materials since they can be seen as rearrangements of the text.

Secondary materials comment on the primary texts. A secondary item needs to explicitly and significantly refer to the primary materials. Those materials which only implicitly relate to the primary texts are beyond the scope of this definition. Included in secondary materials are verse by verse commentaries as well as works dealing with themes in a particular NT material.

Adjacent materials do not make significant explicit reference to the primary texts, yet they are relevant. These materials deal with areas adjacent to NT studies, including Old Testament scriptures, the process by which the NT canon was determined, the historical-political-social-geographical setting in which the NT was written, archaeological discoveries from NT times, the NT's religious context (especially Juda-

ism), Greek manuscripts and translations, and exegesis and hermeneutics methods. Each is important for NT study.

The term "reference" will be used in a restricted sense to include only bibliographies and indexes. In this sense, reference materials have the sole function of making reference to the other materials. A wide definition of reference would include all dictionaries, encyclopedias, commentary sets, frequently used items, etc. Conceptually, these materials are described more accurately as secondary materials.

DDC class numbers correspond to these types of materials. Primary materials are classed in 225.4-225.5; secondary materials in 225.3 and 225.6-225.9; adjacent materials are the relevant class numbers from history, archaeology, etc.; and reference items are classed in 016.225. Again, this numeric notation is not oriented towards the patron.

The second level of description concerns the form of materials. It involves two dimensions: depth and difficulty.

## Depth

This article proposes four depth levels: 1) surface; 2) shallow; 3) medium; and 4) deep. Depth of the material has to do with both its length and scope. It will be calculated by comparing the materials' length to hierarchical scope. The length of the material is represented by its number of pages. Scope is represented by the number of pages in the NT text itself. Depth is calculated by the number of pages of the material divided by the pages of the NT text.

Let us take a 600 page book with NT scope as an example. The

NT text itself is 300 pages long according to the Revised Standard Version.<sup>4</sup> This book thus has a depth factor of 2—600 divided by 300. A 120 page book on the NT would have a depth factor of .4. As additional examples, a 1 page item concerning the 40-page book of Matthew would have a depth factor of .025, while an 800 page tome on Matthew would possess a 20 depth factor.

Now we will define the four depths identified above, although these definitions are admittedly somewhat arbitrary. Surface depth has a depth factor in the vicinity of .04; shallow depth in the vicinity of .4; medium depth in the vicinity of 2 and deep depth material in the vicinity of 20. Thus, the above noted 600 page book on the NT has a medium depth. The ratios for these four depths are not presented as definitive, but rather as being illustrative of useful distinctions.

It is important to note how the use of "depth" in this article contrasts with the use of "depth of coverage" by Gardner.<sup>5</sup> His concern with "depth of coverage" is: "Does the work go into enough detail, or is it superficial?" Our use of depth has the goal of quantifiable description rather than impressionistic value judgments. For instance, a material of surface depth may not cover much ground but may be very appropriate for a given patron.

## Difficulty

The second dimension concerning form is intellectual difficulty level. This involves vocabulary, writing style, organization of concepts, and language. We recognize three difficulty levels for NT materials: 1) lower undergraduate; 2) upper undergraduate; and 3) graduate. These levels are used by Black-

well North America in their approval plan profiling.<sup>6</sup> (We will refer to these simply as "lower", "upper" and "grad".) These definitions are somewhat arbitrary but will nevertheless represent useful distinctions. For example, if a material makes extensive use of such terms as "christology," "redaction criticism", "hermeneutical community" etc. it indicates more than a lower difficulty level. It may well be upper difficulty. If a material includes extensive quotations from the Greek text of the NT, this indicates grad difficulty.

This analysis concerning the description of NT materials has yielded four dimensions of description within two levels. The level concerning subject was dealt with first because we believe it is logically more important and chronologically prior to form in the thinking of patrons. The order in which we dealt with the four dimensions also represents our belief about the thinking pattern of patrons. Hierarchical scope comes before types of material and depth before difficulty. However, we do not present this order as definitive. Also, in terms of information storage and retrieval on computer, the order of dimensions is irrelevant.

### **Synthesis of Dimensions**

From the above analysis we can create a four dimensional model for describing materials concerning NT studies. Dealing with four dimensions of anything can be conceptually confusing. Given the number of possible values for each of the four dimensions, the result is 192 possible combinations of the descriptive elements. This means 192 unique profiles can be created from the model. The model of a tree with branches will illustrate our conceptualization.

Let us begin by looking at the two dimensions concerning subject: hierarchical scope and type of material. Each of the four hierarchical scopes will branch out into each of four types of material. Table 1 illustrates the diagrammatical tree of this level of description. For these two dimensions alone, there are 16 theoretical profiles (labeled A through P in Table 1) which can be used to map out the needs of patrons (communal context). The patrons in a particular library may not need information in each of the 16 profiles. However, by using this model of description, a library can help map out the exact needs of its patrons. The model can also serve as a map for describing what the library already has in its collection (archival context) and what it wants to collect (thematic context depicting material beyond the library).

The two dimensions pertaining to form can also be represented with the tree model. For each of the 16 profiles in Table 1, the tree diagram in Table 2 can be constructed. This would produce a grand total of 192 twigs on the tree as a whole. In this paper, only one of the 16 profiles will be fully branched out. Our example focuses on secondary materials on the book of Matthew. (This description is represented under profile N in Table 1). Each of the four depths will branch out into each of three difficulty levels.

There are 12 theoretical profiles produced from the two dimensions of depth and difficulty (see Table 2). Each of these profiles (1 through 12) can be used to expand each of the profiles (A through P) identified in Table 1, resulting in 192 theoretical profiles for the description of NT materials. However, in actuality the number is less because there is no depth dimension to primary materials. Thus, we have a synthesis of

four dimensions for describing materials into a model for collection development which can be used in the communal, archival and thematic contexts.

## Conclusions

To illustrate the use of this model, let us return to the example of the freshman college student who is taking the introductory course in the Gospels. We mentioned at the outset that there were several facets to this patron's information needs. First, the student needs material having to do with the Gospels. This facet is the dimension of hierarchical scope; the need is for materials at the division level, namely the Gospels. Secondly, the student wants a text of the Gospels in English. This need concerns the "type of material" dimension. In this instance, primary material is needed. Third, the patron also wants material that explains the text. This is also concerned with type of material. Here the need calls for secondary materials. It is also important for the student to have materials which introduce the Gospels, which get into the depth dimension. Materials at the surface or shallow depth would serve an introductory function. Also, it is important to the patron to get materials which are not overly difficult—a need which has to do with the intellectual difficulty dimension. The appropriate difficulty level for this patron is lower undergraduate.

The description of this patron's needs can be summarized as follows:

Gospels scope. primary type. x depth. x<sup>1</sup> difficulty. (profile1)

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<sup>1</sup>"X" means that depth and difficulty are not differentiated for primary materials.

Gospels scope. secondary type. surface depth. lower difficulty (profile J.1)

Gospels scope. secondary type. shallow depth. lower difficulty (profile J.4)

This map has thus provided us with a map of the patron's need. Descriptions of this fashion can be constructed for all different types of patrons and also for groups of patrons. It could even be done for users of the library as a sum whole.

This article proposes this four dimensional model as an effective way of describing print materials in the area of New Testament studies for the purpose of collection development in the college/university library. The model may well be applicable to materials in other academic disciplines.

## References

1. Robert N. Broadus. *Selecting Materials for Libraries*. (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1981) p.30
2. Ross Atkinson. "The Citation as Intertext: Toward a Theory of the Selection Process." *Library Resources & Technical Services*, April/June 1984, p. 114.
3. *Dewey Decimal Classification and Relative Index*. Edition 20. Volume 2 "Schedules 000-599". (Albany, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1989) p. 131f.
4. *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*. 2nd Edition. (New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S. A., 1971)
5. Richard K. Gardner. *Library Collections: Their Origin, Selection and Development*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), p. 185
6. Blackwell North America. *Approval Plan-Subject Thesaurus, Hierarchical Arrangement*. ([s.1.]: Blackwell North America, 1987) Appendix.

**Table 1**  
**Profiles for Hierarchical Scope and Material Type**

Hierarchical Scope	Type of Material	Profile Designation
Bible	Primary	A
	Secondary	B
	Adjacent	C
	Reference	D
New Testament	Primary	E
	Secondary	F
	Adjacent	G
	Reference	H
Division	Primary	I
	Secondary	J
	Adjacent	K
	Reference	L
Individual Book	Primary	M
	Secondary	N
	Adjacent	O
	Reference	P

**Table 2**  
**Profiles for Depth & Difficulty Level**  
**for Secondary Material Concerning an Individual Book**  
*(Profile N from Table 1)*

Depth	Difficulty Level	Profile Designation
Surface	Lower	1
	Upper	2
	Graduate	3
Shallow	Lower	4
	Upper	5
	Graduate	6
Medium	Lower	7
	Upper	8
	Graduate	9
Deep	Lower	10
	Upper	11
	Graduate	12