Quality education requires well-stocked and well-balanced libraries. Seventh-day Adventist schools also need materials that support our distinctive denominational ethic. Selecting and buying library books, and then preparing them for use are specialized jobs that require professional skills not often available in our elementary and secondary schools. The Adventist Network of General Educational Libraries (ANGEL) was developed to improve the quality of libraries in church schools in the Southern Union Conference, which encompasses most of the southeastern United States.

As librarians at Southern Adventist University in Collegetdale, Tennessee, sought to improve K-12 libraries in this geographical area, they initiated discussions with the conference education directors. The university librarians concluded that since the ideal of a professional librarian for each school was not attainable, other alternatives should be explored. One alternative was for the university librarians to conduct workshops for the teachers, coupled with marathon cataloging sessions on Sundays in various schools. The librarians—Peg Bennett, the late Charles Davis, Loranne Grace, and the late Marion Linderman—discovered some unusual books during these sessions. One example was *Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller, which was considered one of the most pornographic books of its time. The volunteers at this school had cataloged the book as *Earth Sciences of South America*!

As this example illustrates, onsite visits helped schools evaluate their holdings and needs. In most cases, school libraries used volunteer help or assigned a teacher to tend the library in addition to a full teaching load. Inadequate libraries, student unfamiliarity with the standard cataloging system, and teachers lacking the time or ability to run the library were the main problems encountered. These problems resulted from years of neglect and insufficient knowledge.

Realizing that a trained librarian was needed to help the schools build a
balanced collection, it was decided that the McKee Library staff would add this responsibility to their duties. ANGEL began in 1981 by serving 60 schools in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. My involvement with ANGEL started in July 1982. The success of the program caught the attention of other schools and conferences in the Southern Union. Today, all of the Southern Union conferences participate, with 164 schools currently enrolled in the program.

The services offered by ANGEL include selection and purchase of books appropriate to student age level, ethnic diversity, and interests, and books to support the curriculum. Volume buying gets us discounts unavailable to individual schools. The books are cataloged with a library software program called Surpass using the Dewey Decimal Classification system. A Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC) disk is then generated and provided to schools with an online library catalog. Student workers affix the spine label and barcode, and glue in a pocket and date-due slips. Schools thus receive books that are ready for students to check out. Every school also has an online catalog that is password free and can be accessed by anyone through the ANGEL Website at http://www.angelprogram.net.

In addition to processing new books, ANGEL allows schools to bring in books for cataloging that they have acquired through community gifts or local purchases. Some of these books may be weeded out if they are inappropriate, out of date, or beyond repair. Those that meet ANGEL selection criteria are mended, processed, and shipped back to the schools.

ANGEL sends a quarterly report to each conference education department showing the total number of books processed unionwide. A separate report shows the number of books cataloged for each school. At the end of the school year, each of the enrolled schools receives a report listing each book, along with author, title, value,
and actual cost of the books purchased
for them by ANGEL. The schools also
receive book request forms so they can
submit specific title requests and com-
piled book lists.

Judith Rovinger highlights the issues
involved in book acquisitions and cata-
logging when she says, “It takes time and
skill to select books that are entertain-
ing (if books aren’t appealing, kids
won’t keep turning the pages), eye-
catching, accurate, inspiring, and rele-
vant. There is a lot of junk out there, a
lot of mediocre and banal reading ma-
terial. While these books may have a
purpose and a place, a steady diet of
mediocrity will not lead our children to
excellence. Which of us is willing to
settle for less than the best?”

As news of the ANGEL program
spread, schools outside the Southern
Union began to request assistance. The
North American Division asked
ANGEL to service schools outside the
southern United States, and several ad-
ditional schools are now participants.

ANGEL’s financial support comes
from the conferences and the Southern
Union. Each student is charged a set
amount at registration to be used for
the school library. Outside the South-
er Union, the budget for each school
comes from classroom fees and a regist-
ration fee.

The ANGEL program provides li-
brary items requested, including books,
CDs, DVDs, videos, and eBooks. If in-
sufficient requests come in to deplete
each school’s book fund, ANGEL will
select a balanced assortment of ma-
terials for the school with the under-
standing that its selections are always
guaranteed. If the schools receive an
unsatisfactory book, it can be returned
for exchange or full credit.

Communication with the schools
and conference officials is critical to the
program’s success. Educating the con-
stituency is an ongoing effort, as prin-
cipals and teachers transfer from one
school or conference to another.

“There is empirical evidence that
proves that strong library media pro-
grams help students learn more and
score higher on standardized achieve-
ment tests than students in schools
with impoverished libraries.” As Ad-
ventist educators, we should all be con-
cerned about providing the best read-
ing materials for our students. “Final-
ly, brethren, whatsoever things are true,
whateover things are honest, whate-
over things are just, whatsoever things
are pure, whatsoever things are lovely,
whateover things are of good report; if
there be any virtue, and if there be any
praise, think on these things” (Philippi-
ans 4:8, KJV). ANGEL can help!

The ANGEL Program, now housed in
a property leased by the Southern Union
on the campus of Southern Adventist
University, is located at 4678 University
Drive, Ooltewah, Tennessee 37363. If
your school or conference would like to
join ANGEL, or you would like more in-
formation and forms, check the ANGEL
Website: http://www.angelprogram.net,
or contact Katye Hunt by phone: (423)
396-2546 or by e-mail: khunt@angel
program.net.

Katye Hunt has served as Director
of ANGEL for the Southern Union
Conference of Sev-
enth-day Adventists
since 1982.

REFERENCES
2. Julie Cummins, “Knowledge Navigators,”