

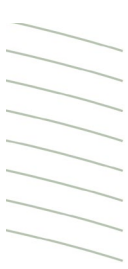


Australian & New Zealand Librarians Attend Atla Annual 2019

by Kerrie Stevens, Siong Ng, Cindy Derrenbacher & Kerrie Burn



Atla Annual 2019 Attendees (L-R): Kerrie Stevens, Siong Ng, Cindy Derrenbacher & Kerrie Burn



Atla Annual 2019 was held in Vancouver, Canada from Wednesday 12th June – Saturday 15th June 2019. Three Australian and one New Zealand ANZTLA members attended as personal members of Atla. Kerrie Stevens (Alphacrucis College, Melbourne Campus), Siong Ng (Carey Baptist College), Cindy Derrenbacker (Whitley College) and Kerrie Burn (Catholic Theological College, University of Divinity) attended various sessions throughout the conference period. The University of Divinity is also an Institutional member of Atla.

The pre-conference excursion to John Richard Allison Library at Regent College and the Chung Collection Archives at the University of British Columbia provided a fascinating insight into the world of rare books and the Chinese experience in British Columbia; whilst also allowing for a brief view on the bus ride into the suburbs of Vancouver outside the city centre where the conference was located.

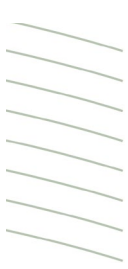
Of the about 205 attendees, 20% of them were internationals, from countries and continents such as Australia, New Zealand, India, Fiji, England, Asia, Africa, Philippines and Europe.

There are several differences between the Atla Annual and the ANZTLA Conferences. One such difference is that there are often four or five concurrent sessions at Atla Annual, so selecting which one to attend can be difficult. The good thing about this is the strict adherence to session time limits - if a session goes on too long, people just get up and walk to the next one, so presenters have to be sure to stay on time. Another difference to ANZTLA Conferences is that, despite most attendees staying at the same hotel, attendees do not gather specifically for meals as a whole (except for the opening and closing reception sessions), and meals are generally not included in the conference fees. This is a strength of the ANZTLA Conferences as it creates a real feeling of collegiality and seems to be where most of the real networking gets done!

The conference began with a newcomers welcoming reception which was hosted by the current President of Atla. What a great initiative as new delegates may find it overwhelming attending a conference of this size for the very first time.

This was followed with the opening reception and an opportunity to visit various vendors' exhibitions. The time was well spent as we were able to meet up with customer representatives from different companies. We had the opportunity to ask questions, to view new titles and had the opportunity to win a prize if we collected signatures from all the vendors. This proved to be a valuable time as we got to connect face-to-face with customer representatives rather than through emails.

The welcome and opening plenary address was presented by Juan Pablo Alperin. Juan reminded us about the importance of open access and how we can offer ways that faculty will consider publishing their research on an open access platform. This address highlighted several tensions faculty experience between making their research freely available or publishing it on a scholarly platform that may affect their promotion or tenure.

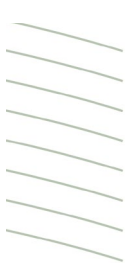


The second plenary session was provided by Sarah Dupont. Sarah delivered her session with passion and presented with obvious affection for her work at the Xwi7xwa library. Her session began with a historical account which was useful for us as our knowledge of indigenous history in Canada was limited. This created a pathway as she then explained the concept of allyship to practice so that support, understanding and respect can be achieved. The work of Xwi7xwa library and the indigitization programme provides insights to the work of indigenisation and decolonization as the aim is to contribute to the process of reconciliation in library settings. The presentation was well executed as delegates left with a sense that librarians are not only information providers but also the mediators of the reconciliation process.

The closing plenary address was provided by Patricia O'Connell Killen who is a Professor of Religious Studies and Senior University Fellow at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. The session was focussed on Pacific Northwest (Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia) religious practice and the influences on other parts of United States and Canada.

There were numerous listen and learn sessions. Some of the sessions of interest from 2019 attended by ANZTLA members included:

- Building an Institutional Repository on a Shoestring Budget (using Internet Archive)
- Librarians as Research Advisors for MA Candidates
- Demand Driven Acquisitions in the David Allen Hubbard Library (Fuller)
- Developing Research Training Services at Asbury Seminary
- Essential Resources or Money Pit? Board Member's and Administrator's Perceptions of Theological Libraries
- Inventorying a Collection – Two Views
- First Steps: Online Orientation
- Weeding or Right-Sizing? Why not Collection Adjustment?
- Worship in the Baptist and Anglican Traditions
- Updates on ATLA Research Tools and OCLC
- Plenary Sessions—particularly enjoyed indigenous librarian's presentation on how to incorporate indigenous ways of thinking into library work
- Two Research Courses...with different approaches
- Small and Thriving: A Follow-up to “The Future of the Small Theological Library”
- Librarians Across Disciplines: Mitigating Archival Chaos
- Maintaining and Building Trust in the Midst of Change
- Redemption & the Library Administrator
- A Question of Identity: Vocation, Professionalization, and Atla Membership
- Denominational Group Meetings
- View from the Dean's Office
- Global Theological Librarianship



The conference was also an opportunity for members of Atla's International Theological Librarianship Education Task Force (ITLETF) (of which Kerrie Burn is a member) to meet face-to-face. The goal of the ITLETF is to strengthen and connect theological and religious studies librarians worldwide by identifying resources, creating educational opportunities, and developing skill-enhancement materials through collaborative efforts. One of the current projects of the Task Force is to publish a series of volumes that comprise *The Theological Librarian's Handbook*, a publication designed for those new to the profession or who may have limited options for acquiring formal training. Kerrie has contributed a chapter on Theological Librarianship in Australia in the volume which outlines the current state of theological libraries around the globe. Another of the activities of the Task Force has been to create a two-week education program for theological librarians from libraries in developing economy countries, and to sponsor several attendees to be part of a formal International Theological Librarian Leadership Institute. Three successful applicants attended the conference as part of the program, one of them being Nalini Premadish from Pacific Theological College, Fiji, who has also attended the ANZTLA conference several times in recent years.

The Atla Annual organising committee and other attendees were all very welcoming of us 'internationals' and many of the ideas discussed at sessions will be looked at further for implementation into our libraries in the near future. The generosity of Atla travel grants and the waived conference fees for attendees from outside the United States and Canada, made it possible for many international delegates to attend.

Overwhelmingly, the Atla Annual 2019 experience was a positive and worthwhile one, and if you get a chance to attend a future Atla event, do it!

The Atla Annual 2020 was scheduled for 17-20 June 2020 in Detroit, Michigan. Due to ongoing uncertainties related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, this will no longer be the in-person event that was originally scheduled. Instead, the conference has been reimagined as *Atla Annual 2020 Online*, an online event using the Zoom platform.