
Editor's Introduction

EVERY YEAR, ATLA MEMBERS GATHER to attend and participate in the annual conference, and this is documented in the Summary of Proceedings. For many, the conference dates are penciled into their calendar years in advance. It is a time to see friends, visit a new city, get out of their library for some time away, and even learn something new. But the 2020 conference was like nothing we have ever experienced before in the history of Atla. The COVID-19 pandemic was raging, forcing everyone into some form of isolation and stopping in-person events for several months. So, what is an annual conference to do? Like so many events during the time of COVID, Atla's 2020 conference went virtual.

The year 2020 will be marked as the year of going virtual. From graduations and other celebrations to the more routine events like family gatherings and church services, people turned to virtual platforms, most notably Zoom, to stay in touch and carry on with the events of life. But the turn toward events on a virtual platform was not easy or simple to accomplish. Just like face-to-face conferences, the logistics of putting on a virtual conference were immense. Suddenly each "Zoom room" needed a moderator and tech support. Atla needed to find a new way to interact with vendors, present the poster sessions, create a schedule for all the papers, and that is just the beginning of the to-do list. Instead of meeting friends in Detroit, where the conference was supposed to be held, attendees waved at each other from boxes on a screen and used the chat feature to type a greeting. Atla did an admirable job of putting on an annual conference despite the constraints and hiccups of the virtual environment.

With the first-ever virtual Atla Annual as a backdrop, the 2020 edition of the *Summary of Proceedings* showcases several interesting topics. In keeping with Atla's identity as "Collectors & Connectors in Religion and Theology," some of the contributions focus on build-

ing and balancing library collections. Others focus on the “connectors” theme by highlighting the instructional and curricular focus of library work. Given the trying times the 2020 conference was held under, one of the papers was reimagined in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the balance of the papers contribute to the ongoing discussion of theological librarianship as a profession and a vocation. The *Summary of Proceedings* collects the wisdom shared at the annual conference and may also inspire you to find new ways to connect that wisdom to your work.

Although the 2020 Atla Annual was held in a virtual format and required all of us to find different ways to connect, I continue to marvel at the creativity and dedication of Atla members as represented in the *Summary of Proceedings*. For those sessions you didn’t get to attend in person, I hope you enjoy reading the papers, panel discussions, presentations, and meeting summaries to glean the fresh ideas drawn from the experiences of Atla members. It has been my pleasure to edit this volume and I hope the 2021 Atla Annual can be a time when we can reunite in person.

Kris Veldheer
Editor-in-Chief