

What, Why, and How?

Publishers, E-books and Theology Libraries

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ABSTRACT Independent religious publishers and Atla librarians gathered to share information about publishers' e-book processes and practices. Publishers received questions from the Atla Collection Evaluation and Development Interest Group in advance. Each editor was given ten minutes to discuss current projects and e-book practices. In addition, the publisher representatives also discussed Amazon's Kindle platform, along with library or seminary needs for e-books of older and out-of-print materials.

A PANEL PRESENTATION

Publisher Representatives

- Bridgett A. Green, Vice President of Publishing and Editorial Director, Westminster John Knox
- Ryan Hemmer, Editor-in-Chief, Fortress Press
- Bethany Olsen, Associate Director of Digital Sales, IVPpress
- Elias Sacks, Director, Jewish Publication Society
- Michael Thomson, Acquisitions and Development Editor, Wipf & Stock
- Rob Corzine, Vice President for Academic Programs, Emmaus Academic

CEAD Facilitators

- Ellen Frost, Head of Technical Services and Collection Development, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University Bridwell Library
- Caitlin Soma, Head of Acquisitions and Access Services, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University

INTRODUCTION

Atla's Collection Evaluation and Development (CEAD) Interest Group gathered independent religious publishers and Atla librarians to share information about publishers' e-book processes and practices. CEAD compiled a list of smaller, religion-oriented publishers who publish in both print and e-book formats. To be included in the discussion, the publisher must make their publications available on a platform that can be licensed for use by libraries (for example, EBSCOHost, JSTOR, Proquest Ebook Central, etc.). The publishers received the following questions several weeks ahead of the panel:

- *Can you explain the decision-making process at your press for publishing a book as an e-book? How do you make decisions regarding retrospective publications?*
- *How does your press decide what platform and licensing options to make available for an e-book? For example, a title may be available in JSTOR with unlimited user access, EBSCO with one- or three-user access, or on Kindle for individuals but not for libraries.*
- *Related to platforms, we have noticed that pricing can vary greatly. Can you speak briefly about this?*
- *How can librarians best advocate for the e-books their patrons need to be made available (often older, heavily used titles)?*

Each publisher had ten minutes to discuss current projects, e-book practices, aggregators, and the publisher's approach to e-book access of historic or retrospective publication. For the sake of clarity, projects and e-book processes are summarized separately.

PUBLISHER INTRODUCTIONS AND PROJECTS

Westminster John Knox is the publisher of the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, whose work dates to 1838. Their academic press publications include many renowned theologians and scholars and include the biblical series *Old Testament Library*, *New Testament Library*, and *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*.

Fortress Press is the academic imprint of 1517 Media. While Fortress will always be part of the Lutheran (ELCA) system, they have always been an ecumenical press. Fortress' most recent projects have included new editions of the *Africana Bible* and *True to Our*

Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary (due out in November.)

IVPress has been publishing for 75 years and is affiliated with the Association of University Presses. They publish for the whole university (engineering from a Christian perspective for example.) IVPress thinks of themselves as being on the leading edge of e-book production since they started publishing e-books in the 1990s on their own platform. Their most recent projects include their expanded second edition of the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*.

The Jewish Publication Society (JPS) began publishing in 1888 to promote accessible scholarship promoting Jewish learning. Their goal is to elevate voices from across the Jewish tradition. They are most known for the JPS Tanakh; current projects include a new book on recovering the voices of women in the Bible. Eli Sacks explained that many Jewish traditions do not use electronic editions of publications on the Sabbath; bibles are viewed as ritual material objects for many communities. However, JPS publishes e-books in addition to publishing open access materials on <https://www.sefaria.org/texts> in collaboration with the University of Nebraska Press. Sefaria is the largest free library of Jewish texts; JPS is in the process of releasing the new *JPS Tanakh: Gender-Sensitive Edition*.

Wipf & Stock was founded about 30 years ago when two bookstore owners started a reprint business for out-of-print materials; Wipf & Stock is a very ecumenical press. Wipf & Stock is the more experimental imprint and includes publications by regional authors. Cascade is their main imprint, publishing works that compete in a constructive way with Fortress, Westminster John Knox, and similar presses. Wipf & Stock purchased the Pickwick Press; this press publishes conference papers and titles considered more scholarly in nature. Current projects include several new series, including *Cascade Library of Pauline Studies* and *Wesleyan and Methodist Explorations*.

Emmaus Academic is the academic publishing arm of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology; their mission is to participate in the renewal of Catholic theology through publishing. They have assumed publication of the journal *Nova et Vetera*, formerly published by Sapientia Press. Emmaus is also publishing the *Complete Works of St. Thomas Aquinas* in Latin-English facing format in partnership with the Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine.

E-BOOK DISCUSSION

As background information, Westminster John Knox and Fortress shared their early experiences with Amazon's Kindle. When Amazon was developing Kindle, they needed publications to make available for the product. Publishers did not want to commit to a product that might not work and were unwilling to put a lot of work into something that might fail. Because of that, Amazon did the scanning of materials themselves. According to the publishers, the quality of these earlier Kindle e-books is not always good and tends to be an unsearchable PDF. Now publishers integrate e-book platform considerations throughout the publishing process.

All the publishers in the panel make most of their new and in-print publications available on e-book platforms licensed for library use. Some publishers indicated that they sell their titles through sales channels to aggregators who then decide what to make available. Most of the publishers said they have no control over pricing, and that pricing is determined by the aggregator.

Fortress explained (and the other publishers agreed) that they make everything available to which they have the rights, but that platforms do not always add all the titles. Their observation is that each platform seems to be different; the publishers are providing the same metadata to each vendor, but they are seeing differences across platforms. They find JSTOR and Project MUSE to be less restrictive while other platforms are more restrictive. Additionally, some platforms are paid based on usage while others function as a virtual bookstore.

Each publisher discussed advocating for e-book versions of older resources. They are all advocates of accessibility, particularly for visually-impaired readers, and understand the important role that e-book availability plays in these efforts. The publishers want to know if libraries and seminaries/schools of theology are using materials that are not available in e-book format, especially if these titles are older or out-of-print. All the publishers are interested in partnering with libraries to make more titles available as e-books and encouraged librarians to reach out to them with specific titles they have identified as unavailable but in high demand.

During the question-and-answer period, John Kutsko, Atla Executive Director, said that Atla is willing to be the advocate for libraries and librarians seeking these publications in e-book format.

