
EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

On June 14-17, 2023, in Fort Worth, Texas, Atla convened its seventy-seventh annual meeting. Atla members, staff, and colleagues enjoyed the Lone Star State's hospitality and explored local history as we met to conduct business, share insights, and renew relationships. Like our Baltimore gathering in 2022, Atla Annual 2023 was a hybrid conference, with face-to-face sessions captured and shared via Zoom. This evolution of Atla Annual is a natural result of our experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, as global lockdowns forced both teaching and conferencing to pivot to a fully online modality. Emerging from these pandemic lockdowns, numerous disciplines and fields of practice have continued to explore best practices in virtual conferencing, and Atla is not alone in deploying the hybrid model, which allows for the benefits of both virtual and face-to-face environments. It is vital that professional and academic conferences continue to extend their reach to those who cannot physically attend meetings, but we should not diminish the personal and professional value of face-to-face encounters. The joy of reconnecting was evident and immeasurable, and I suspect that I am not alone in looking forward to Long Beach, California, in 2024.

In this volume of the *Proceedings*, you will encounter the critical inquiry, research, and reflections which our colleagues shared during Atla Annual 2023. A glance at the contents will confirm that topics are many and varied. Some of the presentations reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on libraries and librarianship is still significant: more than mere memory, the lockdowns remain on our mental landscape and continue to inform and transform library and other industries. Of course, adapting to a pandemic is only one of the realities which our colleagues and our institutions face, and these *Proceedings* illustrate what we have learned in this constantly changing environment. While the contents in these *Proceedings* take different forms and formats — full-text papers, transcripts of presentations, and summaries of activities — I find it meaningful to treat Atla Annual as a conversation among and between members, staff, and other colleagues. The *Summary of Proceedings* documents and preserves this conversation, and I invite you to join this ongoing conversation.

With this issue, I take on the responsibility of serving as the *Summary of Proceedings*' new Editor-in-Chief, stepping into the lineage of exceptional editors who produced earlier volumes, most recently Derek Rickens. I am honored to join them in this endeavor and take up this work with Atla Annual, as earlier volumes of the *Proceedings* were instrumental in my own career development as a theology and religious studies librarian. I firmly believe in the value of conference proceedings for preserving the work of our members at our meetings, and I am grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Atla Annual's presenters and help bring their work to a wider audience. I hope that this and future volumes under my aegis will continue to shape and inform the collective knowledge of theology and religious studies librarianship as our field shifts and evolves.

Finally, if I may end this preface with a personal note: I wish to thank the members and staff of Atla who have brought me to this role, especially The Rev. D. William Faupel, PhD: theology librarian, pastor, church historian, scholar, mentor, and friend.

James A. Estes
Editor-in-Chief