
Bridging Cultures

Curating Resources for a Vibrant Hispanic/ Latino Theological Collection

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ABSTRACT Over the past decade, ATS accredited seminaries have expanded their outreach to Latino communities by creating Spanish-only, bilingual, or Latino-centric programs at the certificate, graduate, and doctoral levels. The proliferation of these programs has coincided with the shift towards distance-learning modalities, especially after the COVID pandemic. Theological libraries have been tasked with providing access to databases and online catalogs, as well as acquiring resources for courses taught in Spanish or about Hispanic and Latin American theologies. This essay discusses strategies for curating Hispanic and Latin American digital resources for distance-learning programs in Spanish.

INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of Hispanic/Latinx academic programs in seminaries presents libraries with the opportunity to expand their collections with the richness of Hispanic and Latin American theologies. The acquisition of digital resources in Spanish requires a process of digital curation to make the most of what is available through ProQuest Ebook Central, EBSCO, and others. This includes becoming informed about digital resources available outside those systems.

The first step for designing a digital curation strategy for our collection is to review the specific goals of the Hispanic/Latinx program and the profile of the intended distance-learners. The seminary might be working with an established denominational or independent Hispanic Bible institute or starting its own program. The curriculum for a Hispanic/Latinx program will differ greatly depending on whether it targets non-Latinx students or the community itself. There might be other emphases requiring different

types of resources. Are these distance-learners living in the US or in Latin America and the Caribbean, or a combination of both? What are the languages to be considered? Due to the bicultural nature of *Latinidad*, most classes will be translingual and expect to have access to resources in English and Spanish.

The second component of our profile should address the specific requirements of the program, such as degree type, educational level, lay ministry involvement, ordination or credentialing processes, and the like. Is the seminary's faculty teaching in the program? Their expectations for resources may differ from those of external or adjunct instructors. Any information related to previous textbooks will be useful to define areas of interest or suggest more recent works to the instructors. Conducting surveys with faculty and administrators provides vital insights to ensure our resources are tailored and relevant. Use the results to set the parameters of your collection.

The resulting parameters will help us to define what we are looking for. Hispanic American theology, as classified by the Library of Congress, was introduced in the 1960's and it was almost synonymous with Hispanic American Catholic theology. It is still the classification for works done by U.S. scholars who identify as Hispanic/Latino/a/x/e (Medina, 2009). Among its many branches we find: Evangelical (or *evangélico*), mainline, Pentecostal/Charismatic, Catholic, Mujerista, Latina Evangélica Intercultural Feminist, Mestizo/Brown, Afro-Latino/a/e/x, and Queer/LGBTQ+ perspectives, with all sorts of combinations of the above. A central tenet of Hispanic American theology is "teología en conjunto," a collaborative effort to theologize together while retaining the distinctiveness of each tradition. This commitment to dialogue and collaboration forms a bridge of cultures between North and South. It broadens the relevance of Hispanic and Latin American theologies for our programs.

Most libraries have these works in their collections even when they might not have been part of the curriculum. This means that even Latinx faculty might need reference guidance to find these resources. Organizations such as The Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS), Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI), Hispanic Summer Program (HSP), and the Association for Hispanic Theological Education (AETH) are good

sources of information about Hispanic American theologies. Even the Society of Pentecostal Studies (SPS) has become a place where younger scholars present their work. It also helps that these works are widely available through most content providers.

Latin American theologies are the work of scholars living in Latin America and the Caribbean. There are two main categories: Catholicism and Protestantism or *Evangélicos*, not to be confused with evangelicals. On the Protestant side, we find Misión Integral (integral mission), Pentecostal, Mainline, Indigenous, and other movements. These groups are known for their vibrant expressions of faith and community engagement. The Catholic tradition encompasses Traditional, Liberation, Charismatic, Popular, and Indigenous theologies. Each of these strands offers a different perspective on how faith interacts with social justice, cultural heritage, and personal spirituality. They are written in multiple languages—Spanish, English, and Portuguese.

Catholic Editorial Verbo Divino and Protestant Editorial Clie, both based in Spain, are leading publishers for resources from Latin America. Verbo Divino is well-known for its strong catalog of academic theological and biblical scholarship. Clie, on the other hand, is recognized for its extensive range of non-academic resources for Christian ministry and translations from U.S. authors. Clie has also expanded its academic catalog with the addition of a subscription journal, *Biblia y Teología*, and other titles by Hispanic authors. There are at least fifty other publishers available via content providers. The vast majority are Catholic universities from Spain and Latin America. Ebook Central also includes content from smaller Protestant publishers such as Puma, Kairós, and Patmos, among others.

We find a vibrant landscape of theologies in the US and Latin America, but unfortunately, they do not represent a big market for content providers. Therefore, we must look to other alternatives such as the independent publishing efforts of Latino institutes and organizations. For example, the Center for Latino Studies, affiliated with the Pentecostal Theological Seminary (Cleveland, TN), has published monographs and collective works on topics such as migration and church history. Other schools are following this approach, publishing on practical theology, homiletics, and Christian ethics. These titles feature Latino and Latin American scholars from North and South

and are promoted via social media and during conferences. They are available in digital formats through Amazon.

Something similar can be said of open access resources across the Caribbean and Latin America. Universities and theological and religious organizations are filling the need for more contextualized resources. Many of the open access academic journals are available through the Atla database, and ebooks can be found in the websites of the same organizations. Gasparotto (2018) encourages the use of Google's Custom Search to find resources solely in Latin America, which could be a useful tool for programs with international students.

What about translations? Translations are essential in theological and biblical studies for dialoguing with one another across the world. But, Hispanic/Latinx communities have also been at a great disadvantage to make their contributions known amidst the prevalence of translated resources from English in theological and Christian ministry studies. These days, Latino scholars in the US are working to get their work translated into Spanish to communicate with the diverse Latino community at home and with their peers in Latin America. The same is happening from Spanish to English in a way that encourages others to discover scholarly work from the Americas. Content providers carry very few of these newer translations, but it is important to be aware of their existence.

With all this, let us not forget that our students and faculty in the US are still seeking contextualized content that reflects the experiences of Latino communities in the US. Institutional repositories are an often-unexplored source of research on a variety of issues related to practical ministry among these communities. They feature theses and doctoral dissertations not only from the US, but also from distance students in different parts of Latin America. They can be used as case studies for teaching and further reflection on qualitative research. Atla has a database of institutional repositories and is currently working on Project Eureka, a central hub where institutions can share the work of their graduates. Librarians are working to provide high-quality resources to Hispanic/Latino programs. A digital curation approach could help us to serve better our learning communities.

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